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THE EYE OF SIVA

-:- Or -:-

Pools of Flame

By James Edmond Casey

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CHAPTER I.

UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

"MAN, Masquerading as Woman, Mysteriously Murdered in Heiress' Boudoir!" Dave Patullo, city editor of the Mail-Tribune, put down the 'phone. "Big news!" he gasped. "I can see the scareheads already!"

He was fired with excitement and enthusiasm by the sensational "story" that had just been 'phoned from police headquarters. He leaped a foot.

"Van Cleave!" he barked. "Oh, you cub!" And then, to himself: "The news of the year! The news——"

A young man popped out of the local room with the suddenness of a jack-in-the-box.

"Van Cleave," snapped the editor in his usual Gatling-gun way, "go out on this story. A great murder mystery—the story of the year, or I'm a cub!"

He shoved a dozen sheets of scribbled notes across the desk.

"Here! These are some facts of the case; you'll learn the whole story when you get out to Pacific avenue. A man was found dead half an hour ago in the boudoir of the society leader, Mrs. Ynez Belasco. You know who she is?

The daughter of old Morton Seymour, the big millionaire banker, mining magnate!"

The young fellow nodded.

"The murdered man wore a woman's dress. That's the funny part of it. He had been killed by a stab in the back from a crooked, Oriental dagger. Who killed him? Why? Who was he? Why was he there—in that society dame's private room? Why dressed as a woman? Why, why, why?"

He banged the desk. Then, forcefully and dramatically:

"That, Mr. Carter Van Cleave, is for you to find out! Get the news—all that's in it!"

"Certainly, sir," returned that young man. "I get you."

He made a dive into the local room and reappeared an instant later, hastily shrugging into an overcoat, with cap and gloves in hand. For fear he might recall him, he did not dare to look at the city editor, but made a dash for the door.

"One minute, Van Cleave!"

The heart of the cub sank into the heels of his tan shoes. If you ever had been a cub, like Carter Van Cleave, you would know the reason why.

He was a young fellow to whom the use of suffrage was a new habit. He had chosen the newspaper "game," as it is called, for his ladder to fame and fortune in the Republic of Men. With difficulty, he had secured a week's trial without wages on the Mail-Tribune of San Francisco. But three days of his trial had passed without a city editor calling him; not one had given the despised cub a detail that he might prove his worth. Not one, that is, until this Wednesday morning at precisely 11 o'clock.

The day city editor, always the first newsman to arrive, had himself just come in. The first of the reporters would not be down before one. And then the sensational murder story had "broke."

Hot from police headquarters, the discovery of the crime not an hour old, it had come. And no reporters out of bed, no one to go out on it! No one, only that green cub on trial—Carter Van Cleave!

Desperate for a man, Patullo, the city editor, had given the detail to the only man on the spot, this cub, who never had a detail before! And the cub understood what stupendous, unbelievable luck was his. On his first trial, he was to go out on the biggest story of the year! What a chance to make good!

But had Patullo reconsidered his choice? Was he about to take away his great chance?

"Van Cleave," barked the hard-mouthed, old newspaper man, "one word before you go. You're a cub. You've never gone out on a story before. This is your first detail; and, Van Cleave, this story is not the usual thing we let cubs cover. You realize that!"

Patullo, on his feet, leaned far over the desk and shoved his experience-lined face into that of the cub.

"This story, this murder mystery, will be the sensation of the month. Every paper will exploit it, for murder, mystery, scandal in society and such are just what interests the people that read the papers!

"More than that!" he banged the desk. "This murder is not known to the other papers! It's a beat! Malachi Courtney, the police detective, tipped it off to me for past services. He's a wise boy. He'll keep mum to the other sheets, and perhaps we'll score a scoop!"

Hammering the desk with his fist, the editor clinched his speech.

"Now, Mr. Cub Van Cleave, you get me? There is not another man I can reach. I am compelled to send you, a green cub, out on an exclusive beat—a murder mystery that may prove the sensational scoop of the year—a detail for a star! And you, certainly, are not an undiscovered 'Scoop' Norton!"

He eyed the cub keenly, angrily.

"To tell the truth, I think you're too green, too small, too shallow to handle this story! It demands a man with brains, and you look too much like a rah-rah boy! Beg pardon, but I believe in appearances!"

The cub paled, and the slave-driver of an editor went on in his bulldog voice:

"But you're my only choice. I've got to give you this detail. And you must make good! Van Cleave, if you don't, you needn't come back! Your trial will be over! Rise to this emergency, or you're not wanted on the Mail! You needn't show up! You'll be fired! That's all, cub!"

The old newsman swayed on his hands far over the desk, his hard-mouthed, stern-featured face confronting the cub, his voice filling the big city room.

But the cub did not go. He faced him as the stunned and deeply wounded by his brutal words.

Van Cleave was of medium height, but looked taller than he was because of a youthful slightness of frame. He had come to man's estate, yet appeared years younger, not only on account of his boyish form, but also because of his fair, girlish complexion, small features, and innocent, almost babyish blue eyes. In short, he appeared to be the pampered scion of some wealthy American family, and dressed like a freshman of undeveloped mind and "rah-rah!" tendencies.

He looked into Dave Patullo's hard eyes, and his whole appearance underwent a change. His body drew up and tensed under his modish overcoat. His eyes steeled to a cold azure, and his pink face went stern and strong.

"Mr. Patullo," he gritted, "you act like a brute and a blackguard! You have the soul of a petty, two-by-four bully! No man, am I? Well, if I wasn't too much of a man to ignore your cowardly insults, I'd take you up and spank you! If I wasn't used to superiors and coaches, I'd—— Be quiet, little boy, or I'll set you in your own wastebasket, so you'll stick!"

And Carter Van Cleave, in the full glory of his boyish appearance, grasped the astounded and enraged editor, who topped him by several inches, and, with wonderful ease and unexpected strength, shoved him back into his chair.

Then all trace of anger left his face and voice.

"Now, Mr. Patullo, I am going after this story you rave over. I will bring it back to you, alive, and kicking. You watch me! I'm going out that door in a minute—a green, untried cub, Patullo, I will come back a star!"

And with a swing and a swagger that were not borrowed for the occasion, but were characteristic of him, Carter Van Cleave, once the pride of Pennsy, the quickest-witted, grittiest quarter back that university ever had, wheeled and sped out the door.

CHAPTER II.

THE MASQUERADER.

AS CARTER VAN CLEAVE alighted before the Belasco mansion from the slow-going Pacific avenue car, two other persons were with him in getting off.

One was a big, broad, ruddy-faced Irishman in the blue and brass buttons and helmet of a policeman. The other was the dead spit of the police officer, save that he was somewhat shorter and the possessor of a pair of noticeably keen and dancing blue eyes. He was attired quietly, but what with a certain likeness about the waist and throat and chest, appeared to be an Irishman of the quick-brained, easy-going, congenial type; a man that had reached middle life and found success and many friends.

Truth was, he was the great Malachi Courtney, San Francisco's famous detective!

On the sidewalk, he turned on Van Cleave.

"You get up here quick, me boy," he exclaimed. "Patullo must have scented a big story. Well, you're in time to see how a great Nick Carter goes over the ground—"

"But how do you know I'm a reporter?"

"Ah, shure, me boy! Dan, you tell him."

The policeman appealed to, answered bluntly:

"Why, you've got 'cub' written all over you! You look spruce enough for a newsman, but you can't be an old hand at the game or Malachi and I would know you."

Van Cleave was hard hit for a short moment; then he laughed.

"Well, this is luck, Mr. Courtney. I was just wondering how I'd storm this gloomy castle all alone. I'm both pleased and relieved to meet you."

The affable Mr. Courtney nodded a smile. He linked arms with the cub and led him toward the house.

"You and Dan and I are the first little birds on the job—the early birds, you know. We will be the only birds, too. You see, we three and the chief and Patullo—five men in all San Francisco—are the only ones that know a murder has been committed in this house!"

The cub looked his surprise at that intelligence.

"Of course, the chief and I had to know, and Dan, too," the detective readily explained. "Patullo I informed because Pat has done me many a good turn, and if I should say stop, he'll not print a word of this murder story."

"But why should you say stop?"

"Ah, me boy, you shure are a cub! Don't you know we have to handle these big boys, like Papa Seymour and Belasco, with kid gloves? If it's a case we must hush up, or off goes our heads, hush it up we will! And Patullo is the one news editor we can trust."

He rang the bell.

"Now, you can come with old Malachi and watch him Sherlock this mysterious murder to its bitter end—tho a murder is no joke in the cold gray of the morning after!"

A momentary wait, and they were admitted to the great reception-hall by the butler, an imported product of England; a man with the suave veneer of an old servant, the woodenness of a servitor of the English school, and a shiftiness of eye that Van Cleave remarked and disliked at once.

Wilfov, the butler, was "'orribly perturbed by the hawful thing" that had jarred his monotonous reign over the Belasco household. In a few shaken words, he told how he had been aroused by a noise downstairs about 2 o'clock of the preceding night, and how he had passed up and down the stairs without hearing or seeing anything more.

It was he who had discovered the murdered man and telephoned to the police. At half-past 10 o'clock that morning, he had entered his mistress' boudoir and beheld the "bloody" sight.

His story done, Wilfov led the way upstairs to the boudoir and the scene of the crime.

The detective paused before the door.

"Me boy, it is one of my most beloved methods, in working on a mystery, to approach the crime with discretion and preparation of spirit. I do not plunge headlong and blindly into a crime, nor the place where it was committed."

"No?"

"No. I first fix my mind on the case and each of its riddles. So I get my brain in sympathy with the scene of the crime. Then I open the door. But I do not plunge in, disturb the atmosphere of the place, nor the right perspective by having to turn around to gaze at the room in its entirety."

"What do you do?"

"I stand without the room where the crime was committed, on the threshold. I drink the atmosphere. I gaze on the room just as tho it were a scene on the stage—a scene of vital importance in the action of the play!"

To say that Carter Van Cleave was surprised, would not be expressing it. He had not given the jovial detective credit for the intellect and keenness of analysis his statement of method evidenced. He had judged him, from appearance, a keen-witted, good-natured police officer of a higher growth. Now, he was both startled and astounded. He looked up to Malachi Courtney as the greatest detective and one of the keenest brains he ever had spoken to in his life.

Courtney addressed the admiring policeman, appreciative Van Cleave, and bewildered, trembling butler.

"Now for the crime. Picture the scene, me boy. It was about 2 o'clock, according to the butler, and this room was dark, but for the crimson flame of that pagoda lamp over there. Some one skulked silently thru the dark, and, for some mysterious reason, approached that banshee of a god over there, with the white eyes and four arms. By the dim red light before it, he appeared to be a blonde woman in a green——"

"I know. But what do you think he was?"

"He? He was a burglar, a clever, heady, second-story man! Look at the wealth here——"

"Go on."

"Well, he paused before that crimson light and the heathen god. He never knew his danger; probably thought himself alone; notice how he lies on his face with no awkwardness of position? And then, without a sound, up behind him crept another some one and plunged that dagger in his back! He fell forward on the rich rug, and was still!"

CHAPTER III.

THE MASQUERADER UNMASKED.

MALACHI COURTNEY stepped into the room. His feet sinking as in grass in the rich rugs, he moved to the side of the figure in green.

The cub was the only one of the others to follow. And as the detective stooped and without otherwise disturbing the position of the murdered man, turned his head so that the face could be seen, Van Cleave looked over Malachi's shoulder.

He saw a face that in its perfection of lines and color was more than manly handsome. It was pretty, womanly. It was the face of a shallow, insipid man.

And this was the man who so cleverly masqueraded as a woman to win his way to this magnificent room in the dead of night. He was a burglar, a house-breaker, a thief, come to strip this room of its treasures in rugs and vases and statues. And a clever burglar he was to resort to such a disguise!

But a burglar? Van Cleave hesitated. The face was not of the type he had noticed in rogues' gallery photographs. It was shaven clean, powdered. It was refined. Albeit weak, it was the face of a man to whom the doors of the Belasco mansion might well have been open. It was the face of a club man, bon vivant, society butterfly. But it was hardly that of a burglar.

The detective, as he looked, scratched his reddish head.

"Who is he?" he muttered. "I have seen that face sometime, somewhere——"

Carter Van Cleave, the cub, interposed over his shoulder:

"He is Hubert Belasco, the master of this house!"

CHAPTER IV.

GROPING IN THE DARK.

HUBERT BELASCO, this man of mystery?"

Unbelieving, the detective snapped erect and faced Van Cleave.

"I am sure, Malachi. Look!"

The cub darted to an obscure corner of the room. He returned with a cabinet-sized photograph in a heavy silver frame.

"Humph!" grunted the detective. He also had glimpsed the photo upon entering the room.

It was that of a society man in a fancy dress costume of the Colonial period, white-wigged, silk-stockinged, with yellow knee breeches.

Courtney saw no connection between the man in the fancy costume and the murdered man on the floor with the yel-

WE STRONGLY advise readers not to miss "THE EYE OF SIVA; or POOLS OF FLAME," in this issue. It is a wonderful mystery story. You will find it great. Read it. Next week's leading story will be a strong, strange and dramatic piece of fiction, entitled, "HER DUAL LIFE; or, THE HIDDEN LODGE," by Ella Martin, an old time favorite writer for the Ledger. It will be followed by an extraordinary story laid in the Ozark Mountains, entitled, "THE ONYX BLUDGEON; or, AT DEATH GRIPS." We have some of the most fascinating stories ever written awaiting publication in the Ledger. Don't miss them.

low-haired, pink-faced, insipid man in the boudoir gown.

"Look at the wealth here," he said, sweeping his hand around the room. "Persia, Turkey and Russia that lived with the undying beauty of centuries.

And this heavy, brooding room, which seemed to smell of sandalwood, was the boudoir of Mrs. Ynez Belasco, nee Seymour—the room where a man, mysteriously disguised as a woman, had been as mysteriously assassinated in the dead of night!

Before the grandeur and mysterious, Oriental atmosphere of the room, Carter Van Cleave stood stunned. For a moment, he actually could not breathe. Then he lost himself in staring at the still figure with the dagger in its back, at the hideous god above, and the rugs and vases and arms about.

"That's him!" said Malachi, ungrammatically but explicitly. "That's the man who was murdered here sometime last night."

Van Cleave and the detective filled the doorway. Behind them stood the butler and the policeman. Thus they remained for at least ten minutes, drinking in the mystery and somber beauty of the room.

"We look into a room where murder has been done! It is the strangest room I have ever seen. Only a person steeped in the mystic lore of the East, with plenty of wealth at command, could have conceived it. Think of the woman whose private room it is! It is regal, artistic, but depressing, melancholy!"

The detective was speaking.

"I always feel that rooms have a certain psychological influence over the lives of their occupants," he went on to explain. "These heavy, rich furnishings surely have some deep effect upon those who live among them. Also, certain manners of crime exist where are those certain influences."

The cub understood and nodded.

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low wig and green dress. But Carter Van Cleave held the picture to the light that he might compare it with the pretty face of the masquerader. They were the same!

The man in the photograph had the same, almost beautiful perfection of features and skin as had the dead man on the rug! And furthermore, across the bottom of the photo was written in ink: "Love to my dear Ynez—Hubert Belasco!"

Carter Van Cleave, cub tho he was, had detected across the length of the room the likeness between the man of the powdered wig and the man of the yellow hair!

Almost unable to believe the self-evident truth, the detective once more bent over the prostrate man and tore away the wig of yellow hair. The short, dark hair of a man was disclosed; still the dead man looked womanish, almost beautiful.

Of a sudden, at that moment, a low cry of horror sounded from behind the two investigators. Both swung around.

It was the butler, Wilfoy. The moment before he had finally dared to venture into the room of death. He had sighted the dead man's face between the cub and the detective. And now, white-faced with horror, he stood clasping his hands together.

"It is my master, Hubert Belasco! Oh, my master! This is 'orrible—'orrible!"

Malachi Courtney gazed a long time at the butler. Then he looked at the cub. And Van Cleave saw that his usually keen blue eyes were dull. He was stunned by the truth, and particularly by what it meant.

So the murdered man at their feet, this masquerader in woman's garb, was Hubert Belasco, the society man and master of the house! So he it was who had stolen, in stealth and disguise, like a thief in the night, to his wife's boudoir, and there been killed!

"Oh, oh!" wailed the butler. "My master! I can 'ardly believe my eyes! Three days ago, he left to visit 'is mother hin Los Angeles. And 'ere he his—in that hawful dress—dead!"

The detective and cub started, at that, and exchanged looks.

Hubert Belasco, but three days gone on a visit to his mother, and here he was, like a prowler in the dark, stabbed to death in his wife's boudoir!

Misgivings and vague suspicions of intrigue and scandal assailed the minds of both detective and cub. Was there some hidden reason for the handsome young husband's visit to his mother? Why had he returned so suddenly? What caused him to creep, disguised as a woman, to his wife's boudoir in the dead of night? And above all, who stabbed him with the Oriental dagger?

Was his wife implicated? Did she know of his return—of his mysterious murder—still more, of his murderers?

Of a sudden, as tho in answer, the heavy hangings on the far wall were drawn aside, to disclose a petite and pretty French maid in a black dress with white collar and apron.

"Messieurs," she dimpled into a smile, "my meestress wish to say she have arise and will like one queek look at burglar who invade her boudoir and try to take zee beautiful zings. Madam, she come now, at once!"

She bowed, and with a radiant smile, dropped the portieres and disappeared.

Courtney turned to the wooden butler. "Who is that pretty colleen? Shure, she looks young and innocent enough, but——"

"She his Pauline, a French maid madam secured hin Paris last year. She his madam's maid."

"Mr. Courtney——"

Call me Malachi; all the boys do. What is it?"

"Well, Malachi, then," Van Cleave laughed. Then he sobered. "Malachi, the maid said Mrs. Ynez Belasco would enter this room in a moment to look out of curiosity at the dead man. Out of curiosity, mind you? She thinks him some burglar, some common housebreaker——"

"I get you, cub. You want to know what I'll do?"

"Yes. Will you allow her to see her husband? Allow her to be startled by a sudden sight of him dead there, with no word or sign to alleviate the shock?"

The detective rubbed his chin and looked down at the still figure in the green velvet dress. Suddenly, he started and swung on Wilfoy, the butler.

"By the way, How is it that, while you discovered this man more than an hour ago, your mistress did not arise at once, as would be natural for a woman to do in the face of murder and mystery?"

Wilfoy, the tall English butler, had recovered much of his self-control. He plunged into a sauve account.

"My mistress returned from a ball hat 'alf-past 12 last night. Hit was hover an 'our later that I was aroused by a noise from——"

"I know. You told us that before. When did you inform her of your discovery?"

Wilfoy looked witheringly at Courtney, in that manner the caddish English servant is so adept at.

"Hif you were not so 'asty, I would get to hit in time. Madam does not harise till 12 o'clock. Hit his the 'abit of most society women I 'ave served. I took the responsibility upon myself, as his my place. I telephoned the police, pledged the servants not to gossip, and told the maid to hinform madam, when she brought 'er coffee. That was a moment before you detectives hentered——"

Carter Van Cleave and the detective, Malachi Courtney, swung about abruptly, for the swish of parted hangings once more had come from behind them.

Where the French maid had appeared, now stood a youngish woman of regal height and proportions and unusual beauty. On her head was massed a wealth of red hair, which looked like bloody gold under the sun from the high window. Her eyes were peculiar, wonderful. They were of a greenish-gray color, and in shape were of that odd, Egyptian form. She wore a kimono morning gown of red and gold—a thing too bold and magnificent for one less full blown and beautiful to wear.

Altogether, this dark-skinned, red-haired, Egyptian-eyed woman looked, in this Oriental boudoir, like some Eastern princess. There was something indescribably Oriental about her beauty and attire.

She was Mrs. Ynez Belasco, the heiress and widow of the dead man on the rug. And with her red-gold head queenly high, she advanced with pantherine grace toward the little group of men about the body of her husband.

At that, both Carter Van Cleave and Malachi Courtney made to step before the figure on the rug to shield it from her eyes. The detective was first, and him the woman approached.

"You are from the police, I have heard." Her voice was full and clear as the pure notes of the great gong in the corner. "Well, could you allow me to take one look at this singular burglar who masqueraded in a woman's garb?"

The detective shook his head.

"Do not fear. I can confess to no horror of such sights. Always I have had an overwhelming interest in the outre and unusual, so I am deeply concerned in such a strange burglar, dead tho he is."

She heaved a big-bosomed sigh.

"Poor fellow! Had I known he was here last night, I might have arisen and taked with him. That is my way, you know, which the papers distort so outrageously."

She threw out her arms, as she glided forward ,with sinuous grace.

"My maid tells me he was stabbed—found dead before the bronze bulk of Siva, the Destroyer. That is singular. Perhaps he sought to rob the god of his treasures, and the Destroyer took quick vengeance!"

Somehow, the words and voice of the woman had, like her statuesque beauty, some strange Oriental quality. And her lack of horror of the deed, her extraordinary interest in the dead burglar, and her mysterious remark about the vengeance of a god—all were strange, unaccountable and foreign.

Carter Van Cleave did not know what to think. He had thought her but an ordinary society woman, the daughter of a phenomenally rich old man.

"Is she an original—one of those pampered society women, who embrace every outlandish fad or creed just to be unusual? Or does she know who this dead man is, and who was his murderer, and is using this freakish speech to appear unknowing, innocent? Is this talk of a god and his revenge but a false clew to throw us off the scent?"

Similar thoughts must have chased themselves thru the mind of Malachi Courtney, for suddenly he tested the woman by means of a familiar "third degree" trick.

He stepped aside. The weak, pretty face of the man in the green dress lay revealed!

The woman screamed. Her voice rose to an eerie shriek, then fell away to a groan that seemed frozen off at the end. It was horror and grief without words.

"Hubert!" her lips formed. Then she fainted away.

"Have you ever seen that dagger before?"

CHAPTER V.
THE RED RING.

NOT guilty! She did not know it was her husband! And she loved this handsome Hubert Belasco!"

So thought Carter Van Cleave, as he and Malachi Courtney caught the woman as sne fell in a dead faint. No actress, he felt, could simulate the horror and grief that uncanny shriek had expressed. No; Ynez Belasco was without guilty knowledge. She had not acted to deceive the detective and himself.

Wilfoy, the butler, now sprang forward, and with the aid of Dan, the policeman, carried the unconscious woman to her bedroom. There Pauline took charge of her.

Finding themselves alone, Malachi Courtney turned to the cub. He put a hand on each of the young fellow's shoulders and smiled his twinkling blue-eyed smile.

"Van Cleave, me boy, Carter Van Cleave, I like you! Now, don't blush, you spalpeen; 'tis not a proposal I'm making. I've liked your looks since I first saw you get off the car."

The cub looked amazed. Since Patullo, the city editor, had called him down so brutally, he had become genuinely ashamed of his boyish appearance.

The detective read his thoughts.

"Oh, I'm not like some. I can see thru a clean, healthy skin and boyish face and figure. I know there's more muscle beneath your coat than appears. You've played football, haven't you?"

"Yes. But how——"

"Nothing Sherlock Holmes about it, at all, at all. Am I not feeling your shoulders right now?"

He laughed, and Van Cleave joined him.

"Now, to biz. I like you. You showed brains in finding who this dead man is. Let me confide in you. This mystery is a deep one. I think it the strangest I ever struck. I feel a sort of awe and horror when I look about this room; a terror of the man dead there, and a doubt of the red-haired woman. 'Dead, I almost believe this is one of those unusual mysteries which defy unraveling, are beyond me!"

He gripped the cub's shoulders so hard it hurt, and stared into his eyes.

"Now, Van Cleave, I want you to help me. Dan I have merely to assist me in rough work; he has no head. But you have a store of brains you've never plumbed. I feel you are the man for me."

Ere the cub could say a word, the detective plunged on:

"Here's the case: Why was Hubert Belasco in his wife's boudoir last night, instead of in Los Angeles? What purpose was behind his masquerading as a woman? Who killed him?"

The detective paused.

"The first principle is motive: First, I thought this masquerader was a burglar. Then, when you discovered who he was, I reasoned he was a jealous or suspicious husband. Now his wife screams as no woman could when not in the pangs of grief and horror. I tell you, this is a mystery beyond the mysteries of fiction! And I am adrift in it!"

And he shook the young reporter.

"Van Cleave, I want you to help me! We will work together!"

Of course, Carter Van Cleave was only too eager for that. He had been sent out by his "chief" to get at the heart of the story, to solve the riddle of the mystery, if he could. Not only that, he felt a thrill in moving in this Oriental atmosphere amid surprises and unknown motives—a thrill that made him forget his empty stomach and lean purse.

"Sure! I'd be only too glad to assist you, Malachi!"

They shook hands.

"Now we have the room and this man to ourselves. We will start our investigation on him. There are surely several clews about his dead body—the faux pas of the criminal. They all leave their visiting card in some form or other."

As he spoke, however, Malachi Courtney stood back and studied the prone figure in the green dress. Then he stooped and examined the hilt of the dagger, which was sunk in the man's back.

It was set with emeralds and rubies, and so wrought that it ended off in the squatting figure of a four-handed Eastern god, which looked not unlike the huge, lowering figure above the murdered man.

Malachi Courtney took out a notebook from his pocket and began jotting down in it, the while he remarked:

"Something odd about that hilt. Notice it is somehow unlike any other in the room? And the figure it rounds off in—some three-eyed, four-handed god like that big fellow up there—is different from the gods on the handles of these other daggers."

That finished his examination of the dagger. He did not seek to remove it, probably leaving that to the coroner. He scanned the space about the dead figure.

"Ah! What's this?"

He pounced down upon something that glinted from beneath one of Hubert Belasco's outflung hands.

It was a Japanese dagger with stiletto blade and carved ivory handle!

"What! Another dagger?"

Courtney nodded.

"And now we know that Hubert Belasco himself was armed, when he was stricken down. What does that mean? That Hubert Belasco with a stiletto in his hand stole in here in the dark to stab some one, his wife?"

"Then again, Malachi, he may have secured the dagger as he passed that writing table. It looks like it has seen use as a paper knife."

"But why? To defend himself from some one's attack? To accomplish some devilish crime in the dark? We don't know. All we know is that he himself was armed, when he was stabbed in the back so silently and suddenly. And that looks bad!"

The detective looked at the cub, and Van Cleave returned his look. Each realized that they were getting out of their depth. As they advanced in their search for the key to the mystery, they were becoming less sure of everything. Each fresh clew contradicted the one before it and further snarled and knotted the threads of the mystery.

And then they were startled out of their thoughts by the sound of footsteps. The hangings were drawn aside, and they turned to face Pauline, the French maid.

She bowed and smiled in her bright-eyed fashion.

"Messieurs, I have come by zee request of madam, my meestress. She have part recovair. And she implore me to say to messieurs le detectives: Look how he lies, at zee feet of zee horrible, evil old Siva!"

She pointed fearfully at the body of Hubert Belasco.

"Look at his neck, zee madam say; noteece his neck. Ees there a red ring about eet? Eef so, eet een fate. Siva, the Destroyer, has destroyed heem!"

With a gasp of astonishment, both Malachi Courtney and the cub, Carter Van Cleave, bent over the figure on the

rug. Courtney, with a jerk, tore away the green collar of the dress.

An inch-wide, red discoloration ringed the white throat of Hubert Belasco, even as his wife had said!

CHAPTER VI.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

THE two investigators snapped erect and glared, wide-eyed, at each other.

Was there really something occult and Oriental about this mystery? Had the hands that killed Hubert Belasco been not those of a passion-swayed man, but of unseen things? Had some outlandish Eastern god put some dread curse upon him that he should fall victim to shadows in the dark at the feet of the evil bronze idol, with the four hands, white pearl eyes and collar of human skulls?

In the full light of day, the well-balanced minds of the two men reeled under such thoughts! But how else could they account for the red ring about the murdered man's throat and the words of Ynez Belasco?

"Cub! He was strangled to death! Not stabbed!"

Malachi was pointing at the red ring.

"You're sure? Then how did she know?"

The detective understood who she was. He whispered:

"It was the knowledge of a murderess!"

Van Cleave, in horror, started back, but Courtney caught and tightly held him.

"Why else should she think of such a thing?" he asked. "How otherwise could she know of this thing about his throat, when you and I and everybody thought him stabbed to death? Either she herself strangled her husband, or she knows who did!"

The cub shook his head emphatically.

"Then, why should she implicate herself? Why should she ask about this red ring, if she knew it must be there?"

"The usual mistake of the criminal. Maybe she thought we already had discovered the red band. This talk of an Oriental god—Siva, wasn't it?"

"Siva, the Destroyer."

"That was so we would attribute her husband's death to that bronze banshee up there, the fellow with the four hands and pearl eyes and round hole in his forehead. Could he destroy any one? I guess she thinks we're Brahmans!"

Malachi knelt down and further examined the throat of the murdered masquerader.

"Strangled to death he was. It was so swift that the butler did not hear a cry. A thin, short cord did the work, and I think it was in the hands of some devil who took an unholy delight in the crime! His face is not purple, nor distorted; yet Hubert Belasco was strangled to death, I'm sure. Not stabbed."

"But the dagger?"

"Was used after the man was dead! Notice its position—between the shoulder blades and sunk to the hilt. Yet it does not touch the heart. It could not have caused instant death, and this man, I am positive, was killed with awful promptness, in a trice!"

The detective, his hand on the murdered man's cold neck, looked up at his assistant.

"Here's how it was done: Some one stole quietly up behind the man, threw a cord over his head, then swiftly, silently, expertly garroted him! Belasco dead, he pulled away the cord, and, as the man fell, plunged that dagger in his back!"

He turned back to the body of the murdered man.

"Now for another look at that curious dagger!"

He wrested it from between the man's shoulder blades. It came forth with a spurt of blood.

A sudden, horror-filled cry caused the two to pause and look up. Pauline, the Parisienne, ashen-faced with horror, stood staring at the bloody dagger in Malachi's hand. She had not left the room, as the men had supposed.

"Look, my girl!"

Courtney held up the dagger between two fingers, so that it might be seen from the squatting, little, four-armed, three-eyed image at its end to the scarlet-stained point.

"Have you ever seen this dagger before? Is it one of your mistresses' collection?"

The maid overcame her horror of the weapon after a moment, and took a long, close look. Then she shook her head.

"No, no, monsieur! Zat ees not one of zee collection of weepons of zee madam. I am sure. Zat ees not a Japanese or Chinese dagger."

"How do you know?" from Van Cleave.

"Oh, I have traveled wiz zee madam. Zat ees a strange, ugly knife. Eet is—what you say?—unlike, deefferent. I have nevair seen eet before."

The cub flashed a look at the detective, which as much as said:

"Is she in the secret of this mystery, acting a part, lying?"

The detective shrugged his shoulders significantly.

Both were of the opinion that, for a simple lady's maid, Pauline was too learned on Oriental weapons, too positive in her answers. Perhaps she was an accomplice of the murderer. Perhaps both she and her mistress were involved, or one or the other. Either she lied, or she truthfully had never seen the bejeweled dagger before.

And the dagger. It certainly was a curious weapon. The emerald-and-ruby-studded hilt was not the most peculiar part. The blade was peculiar, ugly. It was of the curious crooked shape of a Malay kris.

"Where did it come from?" thought Carter Van Cleave, eying it in Malachi's hand. "What has it to do with that ugly bronze god on that teakwood stand? There is some likeness between the little figure on its hilt and his Evil Majesty with the big pearl eyes and hole in his forehead, over there. I wonder——"

But Malachi was speaking.

"Pauline, look at this dagger. Have you ever seen it before?"

The dark-eyed girl observed the ivory-handled stiletto found under the dead man's outflung hand. She answered after a glance, almost.

"Oh, yes, monsieur! I have seen zat—oh, so many teemes! Zat ees madam's letter opener. Eet ees a Japanese knife madam got at Kamakura. See! Eet must have been taken from my meestress' desk there."

She pointed to the ebony escritoire in one corner.

"Well," said Courtney, "we are certain of one thing, at least. This dagger was a feature of the room, not mysteriously introduced into the house like that ugly crooked one we found in his back."

He jotted down a word or two in his notebook. Without any show, he had made notes in this book of the fundamental facts of the case.

He fingered the green velvet dress that Hubert Belasco had chosen for his tragic masquerade.

"My girl, did you ever see this green gown before?"

"Ah, yes, monsieur! Eet ees one of madam's last season gowns. She have not wear eet for zo long, long teeme. Monsieur, my poor, poor master, must have take eet from zee wardrobe. But for why——"

She shrugged her shoulders in that indescribable French way.

"Soho! Another fact for my notebook. The dead man masqueraded in an old dress of his wife's."

Courtney got up from his cramped position and stretched. He told the French maid that she could return to her mistress and tell her there was a red ring about the murdered man's throat. And with a wan smile, the girl obeyed.

Then Carter Van Cleave, the cub, swung upon him. He had been thoughtfully eyeing the dead man in the woman's dress. Now he said:

"Malachi, the wig was blonde, yellow. The woman's hair is red and slightly darker. But there was only a dim crimson light in this room, and he wore a dress his wife had worn many times——"

"What! What do you mean?"

"I mean that Hubert Belasco masqueraded as his own wife!"

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Miss Blunt, Detective

-:- Or -:-

Mystery Within Mystery

By Crittenden Marriott

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CHAPTER XVII.

COCKNEY HAL TALKS.

THE first time I saw Hurd was on the Milwaukee, and I didn't see him any too close then," began Craven. "Me an' Harkness — did you know about Harkness?"

"Harry Harkness, alias Harry Ford, age 26? Yes, I know about him." Willie did not think it necessary to add that she knew a great deal less about Harry Harkness than she wanted to know. She was willing to wait.

"Well!" went on Craven. "Me and Harkness was traveling third-class, while Hal and Cora went first. The four of us had been ordered out of England, as I guess you know, an' when you're ordered out of England these days you gotter go quick. We didn't have much money between us, but we throwed together an' got first-cabin passages for Hal and his lady daughter, and third class for Harkness and me. We figured out that Cora might get her hooks into some guy on the way over an' frame up something that would keep up when we landed. Course, me and Harkness didn't get much chance to see how things was workin; an' it wasn't till the sixth day out that I got sight of Cora away back in the boat. I couldn't see much, but I did see that she had a man in tow. Course, I didn't know then that he was Hurd. I found that out later. They seemed mighty confectionery already. You could see with half an eye that Cora had him going. She's some looker, Cora is, an' she's a lady, too, born and bred! An' she's got a way with the boobs.

"Anyway, I see that things was going all right, an' I went to tell Harkness. An' that's where I made my mistake, tho I fancy things would have worked out about the same in the end, whatever I'd done or not done. I s'posed Harkness would be glad to hear that Cora had caught on, but instead he went dippy. Harkness always was crazy about Cora, you know, an' when I told him about her and the boob he got wild. Course, he was a darn fool an' I told him so. He knowed mighty well that Cora had to do her work, an' he knew she wouldn't let any guy go too far. Cora's an honest girl, you understand. We all knew that, an' Harkness knew it, too. Anyway, he didn't have no call to get jealous, for Cora'd never had much to say to him, just let him hang round, you understand. But he got jealous all the same. He kept a-trying to get to see Cora and the boob; and when he did see 'em at last he got so mad that he fainted. He was kinder weakly, Harkness was, you know."

"Yes," Willie nodded. She was far more disturbed than her face showed. If Craven was speaking the truth Harvey's suspicions about Hurd must go into the discard, just when they seemed most promising.

"Well, when we got to New York, they let the first-class passengers go ashore first, an' then took us to Ellis Island. You know how they do. Harkness was better by then, but when he saw Cora and Hal going ashore with the boob, I thought he was going to faint again. I was so much taken up with him that I didn't get to see any of them. When we got ashore at last, course we didn't know what had become of Hal and Cora, an' all we could do was to go to the hangout that we'd fixed on and wait for them to come or send word.

"By'm by Hal come round and explained. He said the boob was named Hurd, an' that he was just a-rollin' in money, and that he had taken Cora and him to a swell hotel as his guests till he could open up his fine house and entertain them. Cora was working him for all he was worth. She had told him that she and Hal were Belgian refugees that the Germans had chased from their afflooent country. Hurd fell for it, an' handed out the kale something fierce. Hal gave us a roll an' told us just to lie close for a while.

"But Harkness wouldn't stand for that. He swore that Cora had to come to see us, or that he'd go to see her an' blow the game. He got mighty excited an' showed that he was ill. Hal hadn't noticed it before, seein' that Harkness was always weakly like. He told Harkness he mustn't come to the hotel on any account, an' that they were going to Hurd's country place that evening, anyway. He promised faithful that he'd get Cora to come around.

"Cora came, all right. She hadn't wanted to come, an' she wasn't any too friendly about bein' made to till she saw how sick Harkness was, an' then she seemed real sorry. I went out to let them talk free, so I don't know just what she said to him, but when I come back she was gone an' Harkness was lookin' cheerful. He said she was an angel an' was all right an' that he was goin' to trust her from that time on forever more, an' a lot of rot like that—you know! Then he said that she wanted him to go West and rest up till she could get Hurd's roll, and that when she did she was going to join him and marry him, an' that they were goin' to live straight forever more."

Craven paused and scratched his head. "Say! It's funny how folks like us longs to turn straight," he marveled. "About half the crooks I know are always planning to pull off one more big job an' then retire. But mighty few of them does. Something always goes wrong with the last job. And if it doesn't they come back for another one all the same. I hadn't any real idea that Cora meant to marry Harkness anyway. I knew she just wanted to get him away so's she could have a clear field with Hurd. But, of course, I didn't say nothin' like that to him. Cora was workin' to earn my meal ticket, too, an' I wasn't goin' to throw no monkey wrench in the machinery."

"Well, did he go?" Willie asked the question.

"Sure! He went! Cora had given him a wad, and I took him down an' put him on the train and saw him off—with a ticket thru to San Diego—and then I come back, an' on the way out of the station I bought a newspaper, and there in one corner I saw why Cora had wanted to get rid of him so bad."

"Why?"

"She wanted to marry this Hurd and was afraid Harkness would find it out an' make trouble. 'Millionaire to Marry Beautiful Belgian,' said the paper. Then below it had a lot of findub about Heroic Hal, driven from his ancestral estates, and all that. An' then it said that the ceremony was to take place the next night at Hurd's place down at Rochpelle."

Willie shook herself impatiently. Craven's words had slowly but surely killed Harvey's suggestion that Hurd and Harkness might be one and the same person. It was a crazy idea, anyhow, she told herself. Still——

More from habit—a habit formed in newspaper days when she had learned to leave no stone unturned, however unpromising it looked—than from any other cause, she asked a question, being minded to settle the matter and have done with it once for all.

"Just a moment," she said. "How long had you known Harkness?"

"Harkness? Five or six years—off and on!"

"Off and on? What does that mean exactly?"

"Just what it says. Harkness showed up once in so often, most times in the summer. He was always tagging after Cora, you know. The last time he bobbed up was two years ago. He hung around for some time then."

Two years ago! Willie's eyes narrowed. That was the time that Linda had said that Hurd was abroad for six months. Perhaps—however, that could wait. "Go ahead with your story," she said, hastily, to Craven, who was looking at her curiously.

The man hesitated. Then he nodded. "All right," he said. "When I got back to the hangout Hal was waitin' to find out if Harkness had gone. He was mighty pleased when I told him yes, that the boy was off an' that he hadn't seen the paper, either. I asked him if the story was true, and he said it was. Then he told me that Hurd needed a gardener, and that if I would apply he'd see that I got the job. He said he hadn't time to explain just what they was trying to pull off, but that things was goin' all right, an' that he wanted me on hand in case of need. He told me to work hard as gardener, an' to play the part clear up to the handle. Then he told me how to go about applyin' an' hurried away.

"So I goes down an' gets the job, and I attends strictly to business after I gets it, as Hal had told me to. Hal's a gentleman, real true, you know, an' he gives orders just like any other toff, and when he says do a thing, you got to do it straight. It don't do to go against him. I works outside about the place and don't go near the house, 'cept as I'm told.

"I guess you know about how the house was opened up and the caterer come in an' all that. I didn't see much of what was happenin', 'cept that there was a lot of comin' and goin' and flurin' up. At last, after dark, the auto come with the minister, an' he went in an' married them."

"He did marry them, did he?" Willie's tones were eager. "Did you see the ceremony?"

"Well! I s'pose I might say I did. I peeped in at the window, but I couldn't see much. Hurd and Cora was clear across the room with their backs to me. I saw the minister plain, 'cause he was facing me beyond them and the light shone in his face. But I couldn't hear nothin', an' I couldn't see more'n what I told you. But I guess it was enough."

"Humph?" Willie considered a moment. "I never saw Hurd! What sort of a looking man was he?" she asked. "Was he much like Harkness?"

"Like Harkness?" Craven stared. "Why, I don't know!"

"Why don't you know? Didn't you see them both?"

"I saw Harkness; yes, of course. But I ain't ever see Hurd close up. The time I seen him on the boat he was a long way off. An' when I went to ask for the job he didn't come down—just sent me word I could have it and to go to work. I didn't see nothin' but his back when he was married. He was about the same build as Harkness."

"Did you ever really see Hurd and Harkness together?"

"I just told you I never saw Hurd close up at all."

"I know what you just told me. Answer my question. Did you ever really see Harkness and the man you thought was Hurd at one and the same time?"

Craven knitted his brows, apparently

more over the peculiarity of Willie's question than over the question itself. "Yes," he said. "I see them together on the boat once. But what——"

"How do you know that the man you saw with Cora on the boat was really Hurd?".

Craven jumped as if he had been stung. "How do I know?" he gasped. "Say! What you tryin' to put over?".

"Answer my question. How do you know?"

"I know—I know——Why, Hal told me so."

"Is that the only way you know?"

"Yes!"

Unconsciously Willie's hand tightened on the arm of her chair. That suggestion of Harvey's might not be so wild, after all. What if the other three suspects had seen a future ahead, and had determined to get rid of the little Cockney? What if Cora had arranged matters with Harkness (alias Hurd?) during the time when Craven had so obligingly left them together? What if Harkness did not go to California at all? What if Craven were lying about some details that would put another face in the matter? Then, perhaps—

Willie started. She realized that Craven was watching her curiously, as if he was reading her thoughts. She did not want him to read them. Hastily she spoke.

"All right!" she said. "That'll do on that line. Get back to the wedding. You saw them married, and then they came out and went away. Didn't you see Hurd at the door?"

"No, I didn't," sulkily. "They went away before I knew they were startin'. Then the preacher went. And then the caterer's men went; and then Hal called me in and explained things.

"He said that Hurd had left him in charge, and that he and I were going to loot the house and do a marathon before the honeymoon was over. What we had cleaned up everything we would wire Cora and start West, and she would join us. It seemed like damphoolishness to me. Says I, 'What's she want to run for? She's got him, ain't she? What's his is hers, ain't it? Whyn't she stay on the job and go straight an' provide for all of us for the rest of our lives? We'll get a blame sight more that way than we'll get by looting this house.'

"But Hal shakes his head gloomily. 'That was what we was planning to do,' he says. 'But something went wrong tonight, an' it's knocked things into a cocked hat. We've just got to light out, an' that's all there is about it.' Then he looks around. 'It won't be such bad pickin's,' he says. 'The furnishings in this house are worth a mint of money. Look at that painting there, for instance.' He points at a picture—nothing much of a picture, neither. 'That picture is worth $20,000, if it's worth a penny,' he says, 'an' there are lots of other paintings and things to be had. Besides, I guess the safe ain't empty.'

"'What safe?' says I, lookin' around.

"'This one,' says he, an' he goes to the wall and takes down a picture and shows me a wall safe. 'Here's your chance,' he says, 'Let's see what you can do. Open it up.'

"So I opened it up. Opening safes is my long suit, if I do say it myself. This one was easy enough. And it did have money in it—two thousand dollars or so. An' it had something else. It had that insurance policy of yours."

"Ah!"

"Yes, you may well 'Ah!' It was that darn policy that ruined us. Hal went nearly crazy over it. 'Half a million?' says he over and over again. 'Lord! Lord! Lord! How I wish we could get the money.'

"However, there didn't seem to be anything doing in that line—we didn't know then that Hurd was going to die, obliging-like, you know; so we passed it up and got ready to carry away the things. Hal and I between us knew where we could fence most all of them, an' we spent Sunday making arrangements and ordering vans, and all. We were going to do the job open and above board, you know. But Monday morning early, just as the vans were about to start for the house, I reckon, came a telegram sayin' that Hurd was dead.

"Hal nearly had a fit. 'By the Lord!' he sings out. 'Now we can cash that insurance policy!' He jumps for the telephone an' calls up and tells the vans not to come.

"Right there was where I wanted to get off. I tried to do an insurance company in the old country once, an' I got five years for it, an' I've been dead leery of them ever since. I told Hal he couldn't collect. Says I: 'That company ain't goin' to pay up without investigatin', and we ain't in any shape to stand investigatin'. If it was an old policy we might get away with it. But it ain't ten days old. I don't see how in thunder they ever insured a man that was dying of heart disease, anyhow. An' they ain't goin' to see it, neither. If you try to pull it off on 'em that way you get it in the neck all right. We'd better do as you planned an' take what's here an' beat it while the beatin' is good—before we get those people in our hair.'

"But it warn't no use. I talked myself black in the face, but it warn't no use. Hal was set on gettin' that half-million. 'Hurd's dead, ain't he?' says he. 'Why shouldn't they pay?' Besides, we haven't got time to get the things away now. And the fences all will be scared when they read about Hurd's death in the papers. An' Cora can't run so easy as all that, can she? No! It won't do. We've got a fortune in our hands and we're going to collect it. Put everything back in the safe and get ready for the funeral.' An' I'd the sense of a mud turtle I'd 'a' cleared out right then and there. I knew trouble was comin' sure and quick. But Hal had a way with him, and I give in. 'Sides, that half-million did look pretty big to me, same's as it did to him. I'll own to that. So—well, there ain't no need of goin' into details—I give in.

"Then the funeral come an' you got on the job. That Doctor Stackpole of your'n come down. Course, Cora managed to handle him all right. She c'n handle most men when she wants to. An' then things drifted along. Hal wanted to collect right away, an' he went nearly crazy when he found out the company was investigating, just as I'd warned him. And Cora pumped Doctor Stackpole and found out that you was plannin' to open Hurd's grave."

Craven broke off and shook his head bewilderedly. "That frightened Hal blue," he said. "I couldn't see why in Tophet he objected. So far as I could see it couldn't do us no harm, any way you looked at it. But Hal went nearly crazy. He said we'd have to get the body away before you saw it, or we'd all go to State's prison. He raised so much fuss that I began to think maybe there was something wrong about Hurd's death. I always had thought it darn queer that a company would pass a man that died only a week later. I asked Hal straight out if Hurd had been croaked. He said, 'No,' but wouldn't say any more. He said I'd better not know too much. That scared me worse than ever. I'm a hard case, all right, but I don't stand for no murder. But it looked like I was in for one, an' I thought I'd better help out the best way I could.

"So Hal got me a job in the cemetery, an' I got ready to sneak the body. But the day I went to work I met a man at the cemetery who had worked with me and Doctor Moss a year before, an' he told me that Moss' crowd was workin' that cemetery then. Of course that made things a lot easier. So I tells Hal, an' he gets after Moss, an' we gets the body, and Hal and I sink it in the Sound. I guess it's floated out to sea long ago. Anyway, I'm blame sure nobody'll be able to prove murder by it—if there was any murder. An' I guess that's about all you want to know, ain't it?"

"Not quite!" Willie leaned back in her chair. "How about that Hurd den? How was that wrecked?"

"Hurd's den? How in thunder did you hear about that? I don't know nothing about it. It was all done before I got into the house. When I see it I asked Hal about it, and he was as much surprised as I was—leastways he seemed to be. He said he hadn't been in the room before, and that nobody had said anything to him about it. He thought maybe it had been done by burglars while Hurd was in England, tho you'd have thought Hurd would have found it out when he got home. But maybe he was too busy to go into the room. Anyway, Hal said he didn't know."

"How about Hurd's picture? Was that ruined when you first saw it?"

"Hurd's picture? Oh! Sure. I know what you mean. Was that Hurd's picture? I didn't know it. Yes. It was spoiled when I saw it. The face was all eaten out with acid or something."

"Humph!" Willie thought for a moment. "When 'Hal' told you that something had happened at the wedding to change his plans, didn't you ask him what it was?"

"Sure! But he wouldn't tell, and I didn't press him. Hal ain't the sort of man you can press."

"What do you think it was?"

Craven laughed. "God knows! I don't!" he said. "I ain't in Hal's plans—never have been, for all the years I've worked with him. He leads an' I follow. He shifts things to suit circumstances. Most times I don't worry. It's only once in a while I feel in my bones that there's danger—like I did about the insurance."

"So you haven't any idea?"

"Not an idea, miss!"

Willie understood that if he did have an idea he did not mean to tell it. So she passed on. "Where did you sink Mr. Hurd's body?" she asked.

"Close by! Between the Hurd place and the cemetery. Just off a strip of sandy beach. But there ain't no use dredgin' for it, miss. It wasn't weighted heavy and the first tide carried it away. There ain't any doubt about that."

Willie nodded gravely. She did not doubt the assertion. As always, however, she asked question after question, knowing full well by long experience that the most trivial interrogations might lead to the most radical discoveries.

This time, however, she failed to elicit anything of moment, and finally gave up and sent Craven back to his cell. Then she went back to New York to report to Harvey.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PLOTS AND COUNTERPLOTS.

AS USUAL, the night brought counsel. Willie waked fresh and vivid, ready to throw herself into the chase with renewed vigor. Her thoughts had clarified during the night; and, moreover, somewhere between sleeping and waking, an idea had sprung into her mind which she determined to put to the test without delay. It had come full-fledged and, woman-like, she had adopted it instantly. Then, man-like, she had reviewed the circumstances that had evolved it and had considered its bearings from every point of view. Not that she had the faintest idea of discarding it! But it was pleasant to bulwark her intuitions by reasoning.

The crux of her problem, she knew, lay in the thing that had happened at the Hurd house that Saturday night to make De Nemours change his plan of operations. It had not been a light thing, she felt sure. On the face of it the marriage of Corinne de Nemours to Harry Hurd attained, or made easy the attainment of, every possible end that De Nemours could have had in view. All that they had to do was to be passably honest, and they could live and die wealthy. That De Nemours should decide to throw all this away and content himself with what plunder he could carry off was incredible, except on the assumption that he was compelled to take that or to get nothing.

Of course, Craven might have been lying. But Willie did not believe that he was lying. His story fitted in too well with what she knew. And cross-examination had found no weak spots in it.

Some overmastering cause, then, had impelled De Nemours to change. What was the cause?

Obviously it was some danger that threatened. What was the danger?

To Willie it seemed certain that it was associated in some way with the wireless call that had startled Linda Maybury. If Harry Hurd had sent that call, it meant that he had discovered that he had been deceived and that he had revolted. The fact that he had nevertheless married Corinne only a few moments later meant that he had been under some form of compulsion. And the change in De Nemours' plans meant that his duress would not last, and that he would soon return to plague the scoundrels who had overpowered him. His temporary quietude might be accounted for by the use of drugs or—Willie caught her breath—by supposing that Mr. Harvey was partly right and that Hurd was really subject to more or less lengthy "spells" during which he was under the domination of some alien personality that led him into strange places and actions. Might he have recovered for long enough to realize his situation and to send that wild wireless call and then have reverted? To Willie it seemed at least possible.

This brought up Harvey's complete theory that Harkness and Hurd were one and the same person. For a moment in the glamour of the succession of coincidences Willie had almost believed it. But, on sober thought, she laughed at the idea. It was too fantastic! Moreover, it solved nothing. Let Doctor Stackpole weaken as he might under the stress of Cupid, Willie did not believe that he had scamped his examination or that he had passed a man with enlargement of the heart! No! Either the Doctor was an accomplice of the swindlers, or the man he had examined was whole and sound. Conceivably this man might have been Harkness; but he could not have been Hurd and Harkness, too—for Hurd had died of a disease that the man examined did not have. Moreover, Willie did not believe that Doctor Stackpole was an accomplice.

"He's a blamed fool to let that woman pull the wool over his eyes," she muttered, "but he's honest. He'd've proved that by the very fact that he's gone over to her side."

No! Hurd and Harkness were not the same, she decided, tho there might be something behind the idea that they were—some corollary, if she could only deduce it.

Back she came to her major premise. In some way Hurd had been quieted temporarily and had been taken away. But he would return. Therefore De Nemours decided that he must plunder the house during his absence or lose all.

Then had come the telegram that Hurd was dead. This had altered matters—radically. Hurd could no longer come

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back. Therefore, De Nemours could make merry with his fortune.

And there also came in the insurance policy. Willie nodded to herself. Craven's assertion that the thought of getting the insurance money was an afterthought seemed entirely credible to her. Almost from the first she had felt that this might be so. People who attempted to swindle insurance companies were almost invariably people whose reputations were outwardly beyond suspicion. People with police records did not try it, because they knew that they would be sure to fail.

It followed that the policy had been taken out honestly by Hurd himself. And it followed that Hurd did not have heart disease. And it followed that he had been murdered.

Willie reviewed the evidence as to his death. On the side of a natural death stood the testimony of the Chicago physicians. On the side of the murder stood the evidence of Doctor Stackpole that Hurd was in perfect health a few days before, and the fact that De Nemours had been so insistent in making way with the body. Willie had made other inquiries about drugs that might to some extent simulate the complaint with which Hurd was said to have died, and had found that such did exist.

But who had administered the poison? De Nemours? Apparently not. Certainly, if Craven spoke the truth, he could not have planned it, for he had been bitterly regretful that he could not get the insurance money. And he could scarcely have directed the murder by telegraph—especially as Hurd was ill when he left the house.

Who then remained? Mrs. Hurd? There seemed to be no one else who could have both motive and the opportunity. Willie was loath to believe that a woman as charming—for Willie owned that she was charming as well as beautiful—and as young as Mrs. Hurd could be guilty of such a crime. But there seemed to be no one else.

Yes! It all worked out. Argument only tended to confirm her contention that Mrs. Hurd might have slain her husband, and that it might be possible to frighten her into a confession.

Willie determined to try it. Eagerly she sprang out of bed, dressed and hurried to the Fidelity office to see Fred Harvey. A little later she left for Rochpelle, taking with her Pat Riley, the head office boy, who thru her influence had graduated from street gamin and newsboy to a place on the insurance company's payroll. She thought she might have need of him.

Harvey, left behind, at once dictated a letter, to be sent by quick delivery, requesting De Nemours to call at the Fidelity office at 5 o'clock that afternoon to discuss the Hurd policy. He was really ready at last to issue his defiance, and besides Willie was anxious to have De Nemours away from Corinne and away from Rochpelle from 5 o'clock onward.

Willie, meanwhile, was hurrying to Rochpelle. She hurried because she was excited and not because she was pressed for time. In fact, she had too much time. The lapse of sundry hours was necessary to bring her scheme to perfection; to hurry it was to invite disaster. There were some mechanical details to arrange, and these she attended to first; they were easily adjusted. Then she turned to the psychological details. Willie loved to mess with psychological details.

At noon she called on Linda Maybury. "Yes, I've got work for you," she announced, laughing, without waiting to hear the question that trembled on Linda's lips. "That is, I've got something I want you to do, if your conscience doesn't forbid. "Sit down and I'll explain."

Quivering with excitement, Linda led the way to her room. "You don't need to explain," she panted. "Just tell me what to do and I'll do it."

"Oh! But I must explain. I want you to break one of the Ten Commandments. I want you to tell a lie."

Linda nodded instantly. "If it's for a good end—and I know you wouldn't ask me else—I'll do it," she promised.

"Oh! It's for a good end," averred Willie. "And it's only a white lie, anyway; at least, it's whitish. But it will be heard on you personally."

"That doesn't matter. Go on!"

"Oh! All right. Do you know any of the local newspaper men—the correspondents of the New York City papers?"

Linda nodded. "Two or three of them," she answered. "I know Tom Williams best. He's lived here all his life. He's on the Evening Gazette—if he hasn't lost his place. The last time I heard of him he was in trouble with his paper about some story he sent in. They said it was a fake, and——"

Willie laughed. "He'll do fine," she chortled. "Where can we find him right away?"

Linda pondered for a moment. "He hasn't any office except home," she said, "but I think he usually gets his lunch at the Tea Rooms about 1 o'clock. I've seen him there often."

"Good!" Willie jumped up. "Come along and take lunch with me at the Tea Rooms—whatever they are. I'll tell you what we are to do as we go."

Fifteen minutes later the two girls entered the pretty homelike restaurant of which Linda had spoken and made their way toward the back. As they passed a table close by the door, Linda glanced at Willie and nodded slightly toward a brisk-looking young man who sat at it. "That's Tom," she murmured. A moment later, as they took their seats, she leaned forward with a question. "Oh, Willie," she said, "this won't get Tom into any trouble, will it? I'd hate to hurt him."

"Trouble? Not a bit of it, so long as you and I let him quote us and stand for what we tell him. That's all he'll want. That's all any newspaper man wants. Call him over. We haven't much time to lose."

Obediently Linda raised her eyes and swept the restaurant with them. When they reached Tom Williams they paused, and Linda's sad face took on an expression of pleased surprise that brought the reporter to his feet with a bow and a smile. When Linda gestured to him that she wanted to speak to him, he came to the table with a rush. Linda had regained much of her former good looks since she had ceased to brood at home, and had been working with Willie. She still looked unhappy, but she no longer looked crushed.

"I'm awfully glad to see you, Tom," panted Linda, trying hard to follow Willie's instructions and put due vivacity in her greeting. "I was just telling Willie—this is my friend, Miss Willie Blunt, Mr. Williams—I was just telling her that you would be sure to know all about it. Do sit down and tell us."

Mr. Williams bowed to Willie and sat down with marked willingness. Like every one else at Rochpelle he knew Linda's story, and he had his opinion of Hurd's treatment of her—an opinion scarcely modified by Hurd's death. He was surprised to see her so cheerful, but he was only too glad to play up to her. "Sure! I'll tell you," he promised. "Of course, I know all about it—er—— What is it?"

Linda looked blank. "What is what?" she asked.

"What you want to tell me about, of course. Just tell me what it is and I——"

"Do you mean to say you haven't heard?" Amazement spoke in Linda's tones.

"Of course I've heard," insisted the reporter. "I've heard everything. But—which everything is the particular thing you want me to tell you about?"

"About the ghost, of course." Linda's determination began to fail. Her voice quavered in spite of all her efforts to keep it steady.

Mr. Williams frowned slightly. What in thunder was the girl getting at, he wondered. "Oh, yes, of course! The ghost!" he murmured. "But which ghost? There are so many. Ghosts of the past. Spirits from the vasty deep——"

"That's it! Spirits from the vasty deep!" Linda's strength was failing fast. "The—the—the ghost that walks on Merton's beach—the ghost that looks like—like——" Linda's voice died away. "Tell him, Willie," she choked. "I—I can't."

The reporter seemed to have guessed already. His airy manner dropped away and his blue eyes flashed, and he said something under his breath that Willie guessed was not complimentary to the departed Hurd. "No," he said gently. "I haven't heard, Linda." He turned to Willie. "Will you tell me about it, Miss Blunt?"

So Willie told him. She told him lengthily and circumstantially how she and Linda had met the ghost, how they had recognized it—and how it had vanished. Away. She buttressed her story with much artistic detail "tending to give verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative"—detail that made the reporter's eyes bulge and made him look to Linda for confirmation, which she gave emphatically. At last he glanced at his watch. "I suppose I may use this and may quote you?" he said.

Willie nodded. "You may give us as authority to your editor," she answered. "And you may actually quote us tomorrow in your follow-up story. But we don't want to be named in print today. We'll stand for all we've told you, you understand, but we don't want to be named in today's paper. You get me?"

"Humph!" Again the reporter scanned Willie's face and found her regarding him placidly, but with a twinkle in her eyes that was very reassuring. "They say I fake," he admitted. "And I've got to give authority for things nowadays, you know."

"You may give it. Print the story as we have told it to you, and we'll stand behind you to the limit," said Willie. And Linda nodded assent.

Williams was no fool. He had his doubts as to the story, but he understood that the two girls wanted it printed. He knew, too, exactly what a story like this, backed by a minister's daughter, was worth to him in dollars and cents; and he had no mind to spoil it. Excitedly he jumped up.

"That's enough," he said. "I'll put it on the wire right away. Good morning. And thank you for telling me." He turned away, then he came back. "Say!" he begged. "Let me in on the real story when it pops, won't you? I'll handle it right for you."

"The real story? I don't know what in the world you mean," countered Willie, blandly, tho once more her eyes twinkled. "But," she added, "you might tell me where I can reach you in a hurry if I happen to want you."

Delightedly the reporter gave his address and telephone call; then rushed away, leaving Willie and Linda to make a pretense of finishing their stone-cold luncheon.

They did not pretend long. Both were quivering with excitement. Very soon they got up and hurried from the rooms.

Five minutes later, as they were nearing the Maybury home, an automobile passed them. Automobiles on that road were as plentiful as English sparrows, and were ordinarily as little noticed. It was merely a long-cultivated habit of observing everything that made Willie glance at it as it scurried by. Then she stopped short and stared after it.

"Doggone the luck!" she said, with a snap of her pretty teeth.

Linda looked blank. "What's wrong?" she asked, anxiously.

"Everything! Did you see who was in that car?"

"No-o! I didn't notice. A woman in black and a man, wasn't it?"

"Yes! It was! I should have thought you'd have—but no, of course, you never met the woman, anyway. It was Mrs. Hurd. And the man was our surgeon, Doctor Stackpole. And I'd like to know where the dickens they're going—and when they're going to get back? If they're too late it'll spoil everything. Come! Hurry! Let's get to your telephone."

They hurried. A moment later Willie was in the Maybury house beside the telephone. Swiftly she jerked it from the hook and demanded a connection. When she got it, she spoke rapidly.

"That you, James?" she questioned. "All right. Go at once to the office of the Rochpelle News Company and find Pat Riley. He'll be hanging around there somewhere. Beckon to him to follow you. When you get him away from listeners, tell him that Mrs. Hurd and Doctor Stackpole have gone out in the Hurd car, and that I want him to go to the Hurd place at once and watch there till I come. He isn't to do anything but watch, you understand, and to make sure whether Doctor Stackpole comes back with Mrs. Hurd or not. You get me? . . . All right. Take him out to the Hurd place, and then come slowly back and out here to Doctor Maybury's house and wait for me. You understand? . . . All right."

Willie hung up the phone with a sigh. "Well, I've done all I can," she said. "The rest is on the knees of the gods."

Linda looked at her compassionately. "You're very tired, Willie," she said. "You're more tired than I am. Lie down and rest for a while. I'll call you when-ever you say. Father's out and it's cook's afternoon off, and there'll be no one to disturb you."

Willie yawned—a frankly terrible yawn. "I believe I will," she murmured. "I believe I will. I can't do anything for two hours yet, and I haven't really slept for a week."

Deliberately she stretched herself on the lounge and closed her eyes. In another moment she was asleep.

This remarkable story will be concluded in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

Duly Qualified.

A tourist who found himself in an out-of-the-way English village thought he might improve the time by attending service in the local church. At the conclusion of a lengthy oration the minister announced that he should like to meet the church board.

The stranger, in company with several other persons, proceeded to walk to the front of the church. The pastor, thinking there must be some misunderstanding, said to him:

"I believe, sir, you are mistaken. This is a meeting of the church board."

"Well," replied the visitor, "I have listened to your talk in church for more than an hour, and I've certainly been bored all the time."

Finding Out.

"I have been offered more money than you are paying me," said the efficient employe to the more than efficient boss.

"Is that so?" responded the boss, politely. "How much are you offered?"

The efficient employe handed the more than efficient boss a letter. It read:

"My dear Mr. Trumpert: I am writing to notify you that your efficient manner of doing business has not escaped me. I have observed with approval how you are always on the 7:57 every morning and on the job at 8:30, how you work till 5:30 every day, rain or shine, and never take more than three-quarters of an hour for lunch. In recognizing these qualifications, I am pleased to offer 20 per cent increase on what you are now getting. Very truly yours,

"GIGGUM & SWARTZ."

The more than efficient boss pondered the letter.

"Who are Giggum & Swartz?" inquired the boss.

"Oh, a firm here in town," answered the clerk.

The boss looked at his watch. "See me after lunch," he said.

After lunch the efficient and expectant employe was on hand as directed.

The boss opened a drawer and took out a letter, which he handed to the employe. The latter looked at it in surprise. It read:

"Dear Mr. Pedro: I have long admired your flourishing business from a distance and now I am ambitious to take up employment with so prosperous an establishment. I have observed that you have a clerk who is lazy and of very little account. He is out so late every night that he comes to work rubbing his eyes along about 9:30 every morning and nods at his desk all forenoon. If you cared to give me his job, so much would I appreciate the opportunity of working for you that I would gladly report at 7:30 every morning and work until 6:30, with only fifteen minutes for lunch. Very respectfully yours,

"PUNKERT BUTTER."

The efficient employe pondered the letter.

"Who is Punkert Butter?" inquired the employe, cautiously.

"Oh, a fellow here in town," responded the boss, evasively.

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W. D. BOYCE COMPANY, Dept. 11, 500 North Dearborn St., CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Old Foes Afloat

Or, The Sea Women

By William H. Manning

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CHAPTER VIII.

"I CAME aboard," the mate replied deliberately, "to do my part at sending this ship to Rio, but certainly not to be harassed by a woman who has mislaid her husband."

The remark amused Corabel, who laughed lightly.

"You seem to make out a strong case, Mr. Harding," she returned. "You do not impress me as a mislaid man, and my faith in the woman below has received a setback."

"Possibly she is all right, Miss Roxford, but yellow fever, cholera and disjointed matrimony are worrisome diseases in the tropics."

The serious part of the interview was past, and they changed the subject and gave attention to other matters, but Harding failed to develop any enthusiasm at any point. In imagination he could see the woman picked up from the sea, waiting in her web, ready to pounce upon him later.

He did not see her in any other way that day. The hours passed, night fell, the passengers disappeared, presumably turning in for the usual night's rest, and, with the first night watch drawing toward its end, Harding was pacing slowly in the waist.

Sailing conditions were good, with just enough wind out to belly the canvas, and the Sea Laugh was threading her way persistently and peacefully, but a slight fog was abroad and the deck was clear only for a few feet hard by the observer. This did not affect the mate. Keeping just sufficiently alert to attend faithfully to business, he walked with an eye first to the outboard region and then to the wheelsman who stood in a dim haze by the binnacle light.

He had gone to the limit of his beat without sensing any change, with his thoughts, as it happened, on trivial concerns. Swinging about he started back on the beat, took two steps, and then halted suddenly. Wrapped in the fog, a woman stood directly in his path.

He stopped short, somewhat startled, and stared blankly. He did not recognize this wanderer of the night, and it was plainly not intended that he should. A veil covered her face, some sort of filmsy wrapper hung from her shoulders, and the combination was a complete disguise.

"I wish to speak with you, sir," was the statement that followed a brief silence.

"Certainly, Miss——I don't think I recognize you."

"Quite possibly you don't."

"The evening is warm, and there is no danger of catching cold. You may safely remove your coverings——"

"A mistake on your part. Come to the end of your beat. I want to speak with you."

She turned and Harding followed. Bewilderment was with him. It seemed to be his lot to meet a woman at every turn, or to hear from her, and never in a commonplace way. Nature was, as he looked at it, suddenly bewitched. Worse yet, he was the victim of an ill spell. Busy as he was with this idea, he yet found time to consider something more practical. Who was the woman? With her face and figure alike hidden, it was a hard task to answer, and there was now reason to think that she was exaggerating her movements, to deprive him of his one remaining chance to identify her.

A few paces more and she wheeled upon him.

"We are, I think, safe from being spied upon?" she questioned.

"Probably."

"I have something of importance to say to you."

"Proceed!"

Grasping the rail tightly and eying his companion keenly, the mate awaited developments. His chief curiosity, then, was to learn whether this was the woman from the sea.

"Perhaps you can guess why I am here."

"Is it to claim a husband?" he asked curtly.

"Bless me!" she cried, starting. "Certainly not."

"Excellent! Well, as I can't explain your business I shall have to ask you to do it."

The mate felt less relief than his words indicated. Finding it hard to believe that any of the original party in the ship should act the present part, he was not yet sure his companion was not the sea castaway. The idea was destined to meet wtih abrupt destruction.

"I'll waste no more of your time," returned the veiled woman. "Let us get to business. I want to speak of the wreck of the Sea Laugh."

"What!" Harding gasped.

"We should have an understanding," she pursued, voice and manner being of dull monotony.

"What's this talk about wreck?" he demanded sharply.

"Didn't you find my note in your stateroom, the other night?"

"A note saying—what?"

"Saying that the ship was to be wrecked, and that you would be watched."

"Am I accused of such an intention?"

"Is it not a fact that the Sea Laugh is to be cast away?"

"Humph!"

It was a belligerent growl, and Harding felt quite as ugly as his utterance indicated. Strange and uncomfortable events were coming to swell the volume already troubling him, and he did not like the mixture. The only good he was getting was the information that the woman of the present case was probably not the one who claimed him for her husband. This was important, and not a little quieting.

Relieved of the nightmare of an unwanted wife, the mate suddenly became alert and willing to get down to business.

"If we can have an understanding——"

"Right!" Harding interrupted incisively. "Let's pack that idea away in our minds and brood it out. First, who are you, anyhow?"

"Sorry, but I can't tell you that."

"Why not?"

"I am disguised. That is sufficient to inform you that I don't want my identity known, so don't ask me. What about the wrecking of this ship?"

"Granted that you are the person who left the note in my room, the other evening, and that you are now on the same subject, what do you mean? Why do you think the Sea Laugh is to be wrecked?"

"Don't you know it to be so?"

"No. How should I know?"

"I warned you by letter, and have given you time to think it over. Don't you see that it must be as I say? Think well!"

"We waste words. Get to business. Why do you think there is to be a wreck?"

"It is to be. Now, what part will you play? What will you do? Can you save the vessel, and save the money that is bound up in her?"

"I have asked you to speak plainly. I now repeat that demand, and if we are to talk business you will have to comply. I'll have no more of vague twaddle. Who wants to wreck the Sea Laugh?"

"Captain Roxford."

"Oh! But why should he want to do that?"

"For the insurance that is on the ship and cargo. The cargo is insured beyond its value. If the ship is lost it will be money in the pocket of the captain, who is the chief owner. The matter is all planned. Sir, you came aboard because, it was alleged, the former mate broke a leg just before the time of sailing. That mishap was bogus. He was left behind as part of a deep plot. A new mate was wanted, one upon whom the blame of losing the Sea Laugh could be cast. That's you!"

The monotonous tone was no longer to be heard. The woman was in grave earnest, or so she seemed to be, and her voice was like that of one in deep passion.

Harding, dumfounded, stared hard and wondered.

"Tell me who you are?" he urged.

"I cannot do that," she replied.

"What, then, is your interest in the ship and her safety?"

"It would be an outrage to have her wrecked."

"Granted! But, madam, you who warn me must of necessity be one of the daughters or the sister of Captain Roxford. No other woman was in the ship when you wrote your warning letter. Why have you turned against the captain? Blood is said to be stronger than water, yet you have betrayed Roxford. Why, and who are you?"

Reaching out quickly, he grasped her wrist.

"Unmask!" he demanded. "Who are you?"

CHAPTER IX.

HARDING, making his demand, had raised his free hand with the briefly deferred intention of tearing the veil away from the woman's face, but it required more courage than he had at that instant. She was his muscular inferior, and he was not accustomed to use overharsh ways with a woman.

Standing wholly passive in his grasp, she seemed fearless.

"If you carry your probable purpose to an extreme you will be sorry forever," she said coldly. "Violence will bring calamity upon you. Let go of my wrist!"

"But I want to know——"

"Why do you talk nonsense? You say only certain women were on board when the Sea Laugh sailed. How do you know? Did you ever go over the entire ship? Captain Roxford knows better than you who sailed. Ask him, if you wish. As for me, do I look like the captain's sister, or either of his daughters? Is my voice familiar?"

"No," Harding admitted unwillingly.

"Then, accept the fact that you are nowhere near the solution of the mystery. What do you care who I am? Limit your attention to the main question—how is the ship to be saved from wreck?"

The mate was silent. He had no disposition to enter into a study along the line mentioned, just then. He was still wrapped up in the desire to know who his companion was. At her demand he had unclosed his fingers from her wrist, but he was not ready to admit that he was beaten. He struggled between a thirst to tear her veil away and reluctance to proceed to violence.

"Will you answer me?" she asked sharply.

"How can I?" he returned sulkily. "How can I say what steps are to be taken to save the ship when I don't know what is to be done to wreck her? I'll give no judgment with my eyes

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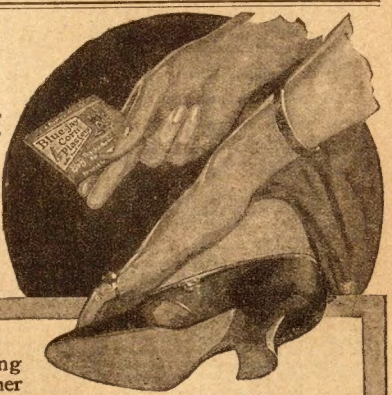

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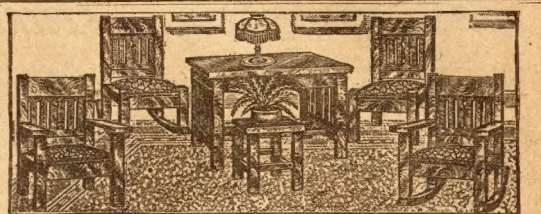

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blindfolded. Come out of ambush. What's the plan for wrecking her, anyhow?"

"I don't know, sir. The ways are many. Wrong handling in a hard squall, collision with another vessel that might easily be avoided, driving on rocks in a fog or gale—all these things, and others, can be used to bring the wreck to the point."

"Indefinite."

"Can't you, being supposedly intelligent, and having this warning, watch out for trouble, and avert it when it comes?"

"Roxford is my captain. A captain is lord paramount in his ship, and the man who disobeys him is a mutineer who goes into chains and, finally, into prison ashore. Safety demands that I do what I'm ordered to do. Nevertheless, I'm not inclined to be party to crime when I can help it. Show me how to save the ship and I'll do it, but I object to acting in the dark. How do I know but what this is a plot to get me to act rashly and lawlessly, and so ruin myself? Am I selected for a victim? Yes, and who are you? I'll not do one blessed thing until I know who you are. Come out of ambush! Be definite. Who are you, anyhow?"

Her head bent and she seemed to meditate deeply.

"Put your cards on the board, madam," the mate proceeded. "Be plain——"

Unconsciously he stretched out a hand, but he stepped back.

"I will not say who I am!" she suddenly snapped.

"Then we can do no business."

"Do you want it said, later, that you were told of the danger to the Sea Laugh and did nothing?"

"I've not been told. I've talked with a woman who won't tell me a thing that is helpful, not even her name. Am I to mutiny against the captain at the bidding of a masked woman? If I knew who you were——"

Harding's exasperation had been growing momentarily, and his intense desire to see her face had swelled into a determination to unmask her, regardless of everything. Now, matters came to a head.

"If I knew who you were," he repeated, and, so saying, swung forth a hand to tear the veil away.

Another hand moved, and quicker than his own. She flung her arm upward and forward, and something bit at the mate's eyes and blinded and startled him so that he fell back, pawing animal-like at his smitten sight. It was the pain of only a moment, and his eyes readily assumed their normal condition, but when sight was with him once more he saw that a change had taken place. The woman was gone!

One strong word passed his lips, but he stared at the head of the companionway without moving. The folly of pursuit was clear. She must already be in the cabin, and before he could descend the steps she could enter her room and defy detection.

Harding brushed his eyes and scowled blackly.

"Well," he muttered, "I've been in some queer ships and heard of others, but never one like this. The Sea Laugh is woman-haunted, and the ghost is not of sound mind. Worse yet, it is of the plural number and wedded to mischief with me for its prey. Women! Bless me, I've always heard that they were well-behaved, but look at what's in this ship! Women fairly riot here, and I'm their football."

The complaint seemed to be well founded. With one of the sex claiming him for her husband and another disbursing on wrecks and flinging foreign substances into his eyes, he could not be expected to feel in contented mood.

He glanced at the man at the wheel. It seemed to be folly to hope anything from him, for he would naturally look upon the call of a woman on his officer as a trivial affair, and the hiding veil, if noticed, would be set down as nothing. Little as was to be expected, Harding finally walked to the binnacle.

"A good needle," he said, peering into the box.

"She's steady, sir," the man returned. "No tax on your muscles with this heartening breeze."

"Right you are, sir."

"The fog hangs thicker."

"Aye, sir, it increases."

"Seen anything unusual?"

"Not a thing. My world goes little beyond that needle while the gray mist holds. A while ago I see that lady come up and join you in talk, but the fog was so thick I couldn't tell who she was to save my head."

By chance the man had given just the information the mate wanted, and he was not questioned further. He had failed to recognize the veiled woman. Harding talked for a few seconds more, and then returned to his former position in the waist.

"Who was she?" he mused. "Three persons, only, are to be thought of, and it's hard to believe that either of the captain's daughters was the one. That leaves only his sister, Miss Annice Roxford. Um-m-m!"

He turned into the night as he wrestled with the perplexity that dwelt in the last words.

"Why should she do it?" he mused. "Why array herself against her brother? She is a quiet, ladylike, rather reserved person, and one of the last persons to engage in such a crusade as this. The veiled woman cannot have been she. But, if I take that position, who the deuce was the masked female? She talked a long while, and her voice——"

He considered carefully.

"Her voice was not that of any of the Roxford party. Now, then, where do I get to?"

He remembered the veiled person's insinuation that an unnamed woman was secretly aboard the Sea Laugh.

"It may be so. Give the captain one helper in the form of the stewardess or cook, and they could carry off this trick—perhaps! A hidden woman! But could it be worked in this particular ship? There's no secrecy here in a general way, and——"

He broke off irritably.

"Oh! hang the luck! I'm a fool to dwell upon the point, for it's not guessable. I've got to take my fill of meddling in the way of mystery, so let it go at that. The veiled woman will be heard from again. All I've got to do is to wait for her to act. When she does that—well, we'll see!"

A high-pitched shout broke in upon his meditations.

"Sail ho! Ahoy, the deck! Ship off our port bow. Look hard, or she will be aboard us, sir."

Harding swung around, saw a wooden shape in the fog, and knew that the vessel that was bearing down upon them was likely to crash into the Sea Laugh to her great disaster. A collision seemed certain.

CHAPTER X.

THE mate became a man of action in the flash of a moment. Gone was the subject of his mental study, and gone his interest in matters he could not grasp. Just then, only one thing mattered, and burning zeal filled his whole being. The ship must be saved!

His voice rose at once, he called clearly and sharply to the man at the wheel to have the Sea Laugh put off her course, and his further orders brought the rest of the watch into active life.

But could the ship be saved?

Almost dead ahead, but slightly off the port bow, the stranger was plowing ahead, her pointed shape directed almost exactly at the Sea Laugh's hull. A dark mass in the enveloping fog, a looming shape that would carry great force with the blow of her prow, a ship larger than Roxford's craft, a terror of the sea, just then—that was what was ahead of the navigators.

The steersman was still doubled over the wheel that had been shifted to its utmost, and it was then all a question of whether the former course could be changed in time to avoid the deadly collision. Somebody ran to Harding's side and he recognized Captain Roxford.

"What's doing, out yon?" demanded the skipper. "I don't see any evidence of life on the other fellow."

"Neither do I, sir."

"We can hardly be sure in this gloom, but one would expect to detect either motion or voices. You've hailed her once. Shout again!"

The order was unnecessary, for the excited lookout, forgetting everything but the danger, began to yell wildly.

"Ship ahoy! Wake up, there! Don't you mind us off your bows? Be you asleep, or what's wrong? Shift your helm! Ship ahoy! Wake up!"

Roxford laughed lightly.

"That's a crazy mixture, but, really, just what is wanted. If the stranger doesn't hear it, he will hear nothing. Anyhow, our skirts are clear, Harding. I had come on deck just before the alarm, and I'll swear there was no carelessness. The blame will not be with us if there is a wreck."

Harding was silent, impressed by this talk of wreck almost on the heels of what the woman had said. It was, however, impossible to connect the captain with the present trouble. The danger was one that no man could plan deliberately.

The mate leaned forward and watched with almost breathless interest. It was a sight as vast as it was dread to see the ships draw nearer to each other every instant.

"How is it?" the captain asked deliberately. "Will they go clear, or smash together for eternal ruin?"

"Looks like a collision, sir, and no man visible on the other deck. What can that mean? The stranger doesn't yaw, and yet—can you make out her wheel, sir?"

"No."

"I think I can, dimly, but the fog shows no sailor doing his trick there. A big ship won't go about her business without danger to herself with her wheel lashed. What's afoot——"

"You are right," Roxford interrupted. "No helmsman."

"And no sign of life, even now."

"Strange, very strange!"

The captain's voice drifted to his first officer's hearing with an odd note that Harding did not fully understand, but it was no time for study that might be useless. The ships were steadily drawing nearer each other.

"We can't avoid a collision!" suddenly snapped Roxford.

"I fear that's right, sir," Harding admitted.

Roxford ran to the wheel, added his strength to that of the man there, and tried to do some good, but the wheel was already fully over, and it was lost action. The inevitable drew nearer, the shape that of the strange ship.

Harding was watching with keen attention, and he finally drew a quivering breath as he saw that the catastrophe, bad as it was bound to be, might be worse. Extreme bows were not to meet their duplicate, but the question was whether the impact would be sufficient to tear the two hulls to pieces.

The shock came. Rigging touched rigging, and then the lower bodies crashed as they met, rending wood, tearing at the maritime vitals.

Under the shock the Sea Laugh reeled, listed, swung up her port rail as if she would turn turtle, grated, ground and staggered away from the hostile blow. Spars flew loose and rattled to the deck, but the masts stood upright. The stranger rubbed harshly along the ship's side and went clear.

"Saved!" shouted Roxford. "But have we got a death-blow?"

"I say not," the mate replied quickly. "Didn't sound to me like a mortal wound. We shall save her. Hurrah!"

"You wouldn't like to see the Sea Laugh go to wreck, eh?"

"Not for a million!" cried Harding, athrill with the unthinking enthusiasm of the moment. "We'll save the old girl yet, sir!"

"Good for you! We are two of a kind. Put it there!"

Roxford grasped his officer's hand and shook hard, and the mate, all sailorman for the time, reciprocated with zeal. Nothing could have been stranger when the claims and doubts of the past were

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considered, but everything was forgotten except that they were mariners in a stanch vessel.

A foremast hand came running, breathless and excited.

"Our hull is broached, sir!" he reported. "Ripped all to pieces."

"Maybe we were a bit boyish, Harding," said the captain, sheepishly. "Let's learn just how hard we've been hit. Matson, take Jones with you and get below. Find lanterns and learn the worst. This way, Harding!"

They hurried to the port bow and looked downward.

"What do you make of it?" asked Roxford.

The mate caught at the rail and swung himself over.

"Stove in for a good fifteen feet or more," he reported, "but I don't believe we've got a killing hurt. That lantern—good!"

He received the light and swung it along the smitten hull.

"Stove in somewhat, all right," he repeated, "but it might be a mighty sight worse. Don't believe we've got it badly, sir. But that other ship—what of her? Just going out of sight, and not a word from her deck. Quiet as a ghost, but not so harmless."

"Acts like a phantom otherwise. We'll come to and investigate her. Confounded mysterious. But we've saved the Sea Laugh."

"So we have, sir. Hurrah for our ship!"

It was no half-hearted cry of delight, for the mate meant all he said, but as he held fast and swung above the water it was hard to believe he was the same man who had sworn to wreck the ship, and the man who had heard of Roxford's intention. The pair of wreckers, forgetful of contemplated crimes, exulted together light-heartedly.

And yet, the one man owed his long term in prison to the false testimony of the other. True sons of the sea, they forgot personal affairs when their ship was concerned.

The captain became active. Shouting orders calculated to bring the Sea Laugh to, he received the report from Matson and Jones.

"No hurt to trouble us, sir," said the former. "We're splintered, but the water barely trickles in. Give me orders to that effect and I'll get the oakum into her, and not a sailorman need turn to at the pumps. Small hurt."

"Plug those holes, Matson. Stop! I'll look for myself, tho I don't doubt your word. Take charge here, Harding. As soon as possible get a boat over and pull for the stranger. She was yawing at last accounts, unless my eyes deceive me, and I don't believe she has speed enough to run away from our oars. Board her!"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

Roxford went below, and the mate was very busy on deck. By the time he had the boat over the captain returned, so, as he planned it, it was Harding who went in charge of the boat. Getting the order, the men pulled zealously as they headed into the fog, all eyes bent hard to sight the vanished stranger.

"I wonder what she will be like, Mr. Harding," said a sailor.

"I wonder," the mate returned.

He did wonder. What mystery were they about to meet with in the other ship?

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INCONSIDERATE PENNY.

"This discussion is getting us nowhere as fast as possible," expostulated the young man, wearily.

"That is because you don't understand," said the girl, very close to tears. "It's all been so very queer, and so rapid and so unconventional! What if it should get out? And it's just sure to!"

"Not unless you tell," solemnly affirmed the young man.

"Yes, it will! I know!" Her tone admitted no contradiction. "And what about our futures? Here you are, just going to be an engineer, and you might be called to war, and they'd probably make you fix guns or cut barbed wire or something else that engineers might be useful for. And if you'd left me at home you'd probably be thinking of me. You know, when men leave families at home—oh, goodness!"

"But, I'd be thinking of you, anyway," persisted the young man.

"But you haven't known me long," the girl went back to the beginning of things again. "You know it hasn't been two months since you accidentally wrote me that note, thinking I was your cousin—and I feel so humiliated to think that I entered into that—whatever you may want to call it. Honestly, I shouldn't have ever written you."

"But don't you like me?" urged the young man.

"Oh, of course!" she sighed. "Of course, and that's just the trouble! You know I never should have let you come or even written to you! You know you'd have been ever so angry if it was your sister who got acquainted with a man that way. And after we were married, sometimes when you'd get cross, you'd —probably mention it!"

"Oh, gee!" sighed the young man, hopelessly. "Now, you're back where we finished an hour ago."

"And, then, besides, think of my art!" went on the girl, tragically. "If I should get married—I'd never want to work at it any more or probably would never have time! And after all my preparation! Honestly, I just have to get some sort of evidence of success before I give up!"

"Then you prefer that stuff to me?" inquired the young man, sternly.

"No, not really," the young woman replied hastily. "But you see, I ought to love it better than my very life! And I think I ought to wait until I knew you better, too."

"See here, Marta," exclaimed the young man, and his voice was almost shaky, "you're getting back again to the time when we first met, and I'm not going to let you. We're going to settle this. I can't stand the strain, and I'm surprised that you can!

"Here's a penny; we'll flip it. If it comes heads, you marry me and never allude to this again. If it comes tails, I lose, and I'll remain unwed, but will take the trouble to get blown up just as soon as possible in a powder factory, if they don't send me to France. Two out of three will decide."

"Oh," whispered the girl, "How perfectly tragic!"

"Here she goes," said the young man, flipping the coin. They watched it spin. "Tails! Score one for the blowup!"

The young man paused. The girl took a deep breath. He tossed the coin and they watched its arbitrament again. "Heads!"

"One for wedding bells and one for the powder works," said the young man with a grim smile. "Now for the finals!"

"Tails!" They both whispered it, oppressed by the coin's heartless decision.

"Well," said the young man after a burdened moment. She said nothing. He reached for his hat.

"Here goes nothing!" he remarked.

He had almost crossed the room when he felt a rush as of wind behind him and turned just in time to catch something very human and wrathful and clinging at the same time.

"George, stop!" she commanded. "This is all wrong. Flipping pennies is too much like gambling! It's wicked. Furthermore, I won't be managed by a little old penny!"

"Is that all?" asked the young man. "Of course it isn't all," said the young woman. "But its' enough, isn't it?"

Home Guards.

"I haven't seen your husband for several days," remarked Mrs. Turpentine. "Is he out of town?"

"No, he's in the house," replied Mrs. Curfew, "but his head is badly dented and bruised, and he is threatened with nervous prostration, and I won't allow him to leave the premises until he is more like himself.

"I'm sure I don't know what's going to become of Mr. Curfew unless he can get rid of some of his patriotism. I'm glad to have a husband who is willing and anxious to make sacrifices for his country, but I can't help thinking that even patriotism may be carried too far.

"My husband has been trying to enlist ever since diplomatic relations with Germany were broken off, but the officials won't accept him. They take one look at his flowing white whiskers and advise him to get a plush-lined rocking chair and a pair of carpet slippers, and spend his declining years by the fireside. One sergeant or corporal or other enlisting officer said the country was trying to organize an army, not an octogenarians' club, and Mr. Curfew was boiling mad.

"Finally, seeing that he couldn't break into the army, he decided to organize a regiment of home guards to police the town when the able-bodied young men are called away. He went around and interviewed a lot of the patriarchs in the neighborhood, and they all said it would be a fine thing, and they would be glad to take part.

"Mr. Curfew elected himself colonel or brigadier general or something. He felt that he was entitled to the commanding position, as the idea was his own, and the old men admitted that it was fair, and so the other evening they assembled for a drill on Johnson's vacant lot across the alley. Mr. Curfew had dug up a sword and a big brass helmet with a plume on it, and he had a red sash around his waist and large spurs on his boots, and when he walked he clanked like a keg of nails.

"He certainly was an imposing figure when he went out of the house in all his martial array, and I was proud of his appearance, altho I feared the worst, for I didn't believe the old men of his brigade would stand it to be bossed around. I knew most of them personally, and they are a cantankerous lot, and their wives can't get along with them.

"My husband shouted some order and some of the men obeyed and others just stood around grinning. Mr. Gooseworthy said there was no sense in such an order and that it was contrary to all military rules and the ethics of West Point, or words to that effect.

"My husband reprimanded him severely, which was perfectly proper, for if the commanding officer of a home guard can't maintain discipline there is going to be anarchy. Mr. Gooseworthy said he'd be everlastingly drawn and quartered if he'd be spoken to in that tone of voice by anybody, and he picked up a chunk of vitrified brick and threw it at my husband.

"It struck his brass helmet and jammed it down over his ears, so that we had to get the blacksmith to pry it off. Meanwhile all the members of the home guard indulged in a riot, some supporting my husband and some backing Mr. Gooseworthy, and they were all bunged up more or less, but most of the bricks and things hit my husband, for he was where the weapons were thickest, as he always is, and I really don't want the neighbors to see him until his head is healed up."

Reversed.

An Eastern publisher is credited with a unique criticism of a story teller who had begun promisingly, but soon degenerated into the lowest type of "best seller."

"This gentleman's biography," said the publisher, "can be compromised within two questions and answers thus: 'How did he begin writing?' 'With a wealth of thought.' 'How did he continue?' 'With a thought of wealth'!"

Unable to Judge.

At a meeting of clergymen a curate was anxious to bring himself under the notice of the archbishop. He informed his grace that he had recently seen a wonderful example of the ways of Providence. "Your Grace," said the curate, "my aunt intended taking a railway journey, but missed the train owing to her cab being held up. That very train met with an accident, and many passengers were killed and injured. Was not that a wonderful intervention of Providence?" The archbishop looked at the curate and, after pausing a moment, simply said: "I didn't know your aunt."

Mortified.

"I never was so mortified in my life."

"What is the matter now?"

"You know that little gown I bought for $16.50 that looked as tho it must have cost four times that and was so becoming to me? I never dreamed any one would guess its price or where I bought it."

"Well, did any one?"

"Yes. I wore it for the first time last night at a dinner dance, and there were just sixteen other women there with gowns exactly like it."

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Try it. It will pay you. Write the five letters, cut out this advertisement and mail it to us, and inclose four cents in stamps for packing, postage, mailing, etc. We will then send you a beautiful free surprise present which you will like.

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Fred—"Have courage, dearest. I think I can get you safely ashore."

Ethel—"Oh, couldn't you pick out a place where the waves are lower? Do you think we will reach the shore? And is my hair awfully mussed up? Will any one see us when we land?"

Probably Was Dead.

Two Irishmen were working on the roof of a building one day, when one made a misstep and fell to the ground; the other leaned over and called: "Are ye dead or alive, Mike?"

"I'm alive," said Mike, feebly.

"Sure, yer such a liar I don't know whether to believe ye or not."

"Well, then, I must be dead," said Mike, "for ye would never dare to call me a liar if I were alive."

Little to Be Told.

"You have sworn to tell nothing but the truth."

"Nothing but the truth, your honor!"

"Precisely."

"Then, Judge, with that limitation upon me, I might as well warn you that I'm not going to have much to say."

Groom—"You will always look the same to me, my darling."

Bride—"Foolish boy! And I have ordered ten new gowns already."

The Meanest Man.

Burks—"He's the meanest man in town."

Smirks—"And why?"

Burks—"I told him that I bossed my wife, and he went and told her."

A Great Pair.

John D. Rockefeller tells this story: "Golfing one bright winter day, I had for a caddie a boy who didn't know me. An unfortunate stroke landed me in a clump of high grass.

"'My, my,' I said. 'What am I to do now?'

"'See that there tree,' said the boy, pointing to a tall tree a mile away. 'Well, drive straight for that.'

"I lofted vigorously and, fortunately, my ball soared up into the air: it landed, and it rolled right onto the putting green.

"'How's that, my boy?' I cried.

"'Gee, boss,' he said, 'if I had your strength and you had my brains, what a pair we'd make!'"

Saw Him First.

A Quaker had gotten himself into trouble with the authorities and the sheriff called to escort him to the lockup.

"Is your husband in?" he inquired of the good wife who came to the door.

"My husband will see thee," she replied. "Come in."

The sheriff entered, was bidden to make himself at home, and was hospitably entertained for half an hour, but no husband appeared. At last the sheriff grew impatient.

"Look here," said he, "I thought you said your husband would see me."

"He has seen thee," was the calm reply, "but he did not like thy looks and has gone another way."

Her Birthday Gift.

There was once a husband who gave real consideration to his wife's birthday, and on the evening of that day he brought home an interesting little parcel carefully wrapped in white string which he handed to his wife.

"Oh, you darling!" said she. "Then you didn't forget my birthday, after all, did you?"

She opened the little parcel with interest, then she gave a kind of groan.

"Pipe cleaners!" she said.

"Yes, love," said the husband. "I knew they'd please you. You never did like me to use your hairpins, did you?"

Claiming a Meteorite.

One of our best known astronomers was talking about the difficulties and intricacies that astronomy presents to the popular mind.

"For instance," he said, smiling, "there is the story of the meteorite that fell on an Essex farm a year ago. It was a valuable meteorite, and the landlord claimed it at once.

"'All minerals and metals on the land belong to me,' he said. 'That's in the lease.'

"But the tenant demurred. 'This meteorite,' he said, 'wasn't on the farm, you must remember, when the lease was drawn up.'

"This was certainly a poser; but the landlord was equal to the occasion, for he promptly retorted: 'Well, then, I claim it as flying game.'

"But the tenant was ready for him. 'It's got neither wings nor feathers,' he said. 'Therefore, as ground game, it is mine.'

"How long they would have continued their argument I cannot say, for at that moment a revenue officer came up and proceeded to take possession of the meteorite. 'Because,' said he, 'it is an article introduced into this country without payment of duty.'"

His Rights.

"Why did you strike this man?" asked the Judge sternly.

"He called me a liar, your honor," replied the accused.

"Is that true?" asked the Judge, turning to the man with the mussed-up face.

"Sure, it's true," said the accuser. "I called him a liar because he is one, and I can prove it."

"What have you got to say to that?" asked the Judge of the defendant.

"It's got nothing to do with the case, your honor," was the unexpected reply. "Even if I am a liar, I guess I've got a right to be sensitive about it, ain't I?"

"Where have you been, John?"

"My dear, it's a military secret."

Haste of the Lazy Man.

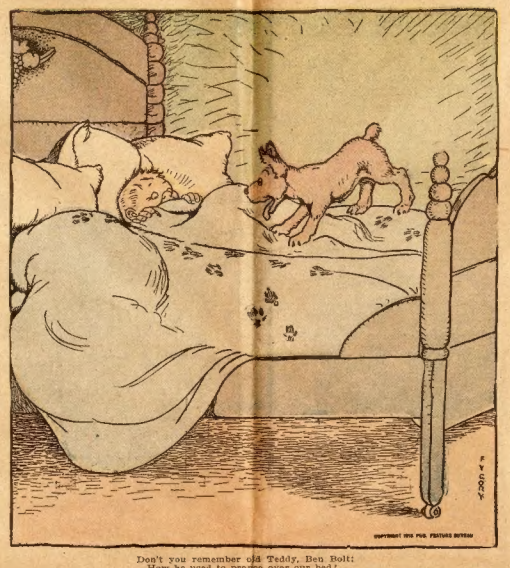
The laziest man in the village was actually running, and running hard. One, on he ran, until—crash—he landed plump into the portly vicar. "What—what is the matter?" gasped the reverend gentleman in astonishment. "Can't stop, sir!" came the hurried reply. "I've just 'eard o' some work." "And have you got the job?" asked the vicar interestedly. "Don't know sir; just gone to see." "What is it?" asked the clergyman in amazement. "Some washin' for my wife."

Advice to Poets.

"Is it necessary to inclose stamps?" asked the poet.

"Mora necessary even than to inclose poetry," responded the experienced author.

"BEN BOLT"—The Kid That You Were Yourself.



Don't you remember old Teddy, Ben Bolt?
How he used to prance over our bed?
He had fleas, I suppose, and a chuly wet nose,
But I've seen worse play-fellows than Ted!

INVITATION.

Let us leave the ladies, Willie,
Cut the chatter and the dance,
Don't you see the dames grow chilly?
They know that we've got a chance.
Got a chance that calls for hearty,
Healthy, wholesome men and true,
Wilhelm's giving quite a party,
And invited me and you.

To the oldsters leave the trading,
Dollar-chasing does seem quiet,
When the Hun is schoolhouse raiding—
Wait not for the old boys' sneer,
Bill has started conflagrations,
Pillages the world aflame;
Let us go to save the nations
For the honor of our name!

Unanswerable.

"I tell you," said Pat, "the ould fri'nd is the best, after all, and, what's more, I can prove it."

"How are you goin' to prove it?"

"Where will you find a new fri'nd that has shtud by ye as long as the ould ones have?"

He Knew.

"If you go first, dear, you'll wait for me on the other shore, won't you?" questioned the fond wife.

"I suppose so," returned her husband, with a sigh. "I never went anywhere yet without having to wait for you."

Cruelty.

Mrs. Clubleigh—"My husband treats me like a dog."

Caller—"How so?"

Mrs. Clubleigh—"He makes me sit up for him."

INEVITABLE.

Altho you have no thought of wroth
As natural foes you note,
You've got to fight the little moth
That cuddles in your coat.
The garden-slaying bugs and worms
You may not calmly slight,
No matter how you offer terms,
You've simply got to fight.

You've got to fight the sun on high
That cracks and warps your roof,
You've got to fight the rain and try
To make things waterproof.
You may aspire to lead a life
All placid and polite,
But somewhere there's a streak of strife,
You've simply got to fight.

Discouraging the Custom.

"I don't believe in war," remarked Broncho Bob.

"Neither do I," said Three-Finger Sam. "And I also don't believe in hoss-stealin'; therefore bein' willin' to get out with a firearm an' discourage anybody who tries to introduce the custom."

Trying It on His Friend.

"Ah, good morning, Jenkins," said the aged professor as an old friend walked into his laboratory. "I was just hoping you'd drop in. I want your help."

"Oh, certainly, professor. What can I do?"

"This is what's bothering me," said the old man, producing a sheet of brown paper covered with a quantity of white powder. "My taste has become so vitiated thru continually tasting things that I can't trust it any longer. Would you mind putting a little of this on your tongue and telling me what it tastes like?"

"By all means!" said the other, and placed the powder on his tongue.

"Note any effects?"

"No, professor."

"Does it bite the tongue?"

"No."

"Is it unpleasant?"

"No: it's rather bitter, tho."

"Ah, I thought so."

"What is it exactly, professor?"

"I don't quite know. That's what I'm trying to find out. Some one in this district has been poisoning horses with it!"

Not Disturbed There.

A spider one day was crawling down the aisle of an old church, looking very disconsolate and with a decided limp, and on his way met another spider, who accosted him as follows:

"Well, old chap, what's the matter? Lost a couple of fat flies or is your liver out of order?"

"Neither, dear friend. The fact is I sleep under the pulpit cushion and the vicar will persist in banging on the cushion to emphasize his points, and I am suffering from three broken legs."

"Oh, I am sorry for you, but if you don't mind sharing my bunk you are quite welcome."

"And where may that be?"

"In the poor box. Nobody ever disturbs me there."

Miss Stripey—"You sailors must run terrible risks in war time?"

Jacko—"Oh, no. We don't get so much shore leave now, y'know."

Missed Chances.

A London divine was entertaining a couple of clergymen from Birmingham at dinner. The guests spoke in praise of a sermon their host had delivered the Sunday before. The host's son was at the table, and one of the clergymen said to him: "My lad, what did you think of your father's sermon?"

"I think it was very good," said the boy, "but there were three mighty fine places where he could have stopped."

The Worm Turns.

Editor—"This isn't poetry; it's pure rubbish."

Poet—"So glad you find it suitable for your magazine."

Jones—"What is the consultation of physicians at Dobson's house for?"

Brown—"His best laying hen has the pip."

He and She.

"Are you fond of literature?" he asked.

"Passionately," she replied.

"Then you must admire Sir Walter Scott," he exclaimed with sudden animation, "is not his 'Lady of the Lake' exquisite in its flowing grace and poetic imagery?"

"It is perfectly lovely," she assented, clasping her hands in ecstacy. "I suppose I have read it a dozen times."

"And Scott's 'Marmion,'" he continued, "and 'Peveril of the Peak'?"

"I just dote upon them," she replied.

"And Scott's Emulsion?" he continued hastily, a faint suspicion dawning upon him.

"I think," she interrupted rashly, "that it's the best thing he ever wrote."

The Fish Scales.

Along the Fox River, a few miles above Wedron, Ill., an old timer named Andy Hankins has a shack, and he has made most of the record fish catches in that vicinity during forty years. He has a big record book containing dates and weights to impress visitors.

Last summer a young married couple from Chicago camped in a luxurious lodge three miles above old Hankins' place. A baby was born in the lodge, and the only scales the father could obtain on which to weigh the child was that with which Andy Hankins had weighed all the big fish he had caught in ten years.

The baby tipped the scales at 35 pounds!

A Long Wait, No Doubt.

An English artist once staying in the north of Ireland thought to have a joke at an old farmer's expense. So he proposed to paint the farmhouse for 5 guineas; the farmer agreed, but was very particular he should be painted standing at the door. When the painting was finished, to the farmer's disgust he found the careless artist had omitted "to paint him in." But the wily artist passed it off as a great joke, saying: "Oh! you have just gone in to get the 5 guineas."

"Oh! have I?" said the old farmer, irately. "That's very well, just hang it up and wait till I come out with the money."

Cautious Mourner.

Walking thru the village street one day, the widowed Lady Bountiful met old Farmer Stubbs on his way to market. Her greeting went unnoticed.

"Stubbs," said she, indignantly, "you might at least raise your hat to me!"

"I beg your pardon, m'lady," was the reply, "but my poor wife ain't dead more'n two weeks, and I ain't started lookin' at the wimmin yet!"

The Pupils Giggled.

The grammar school principal went from room to room explaining what to do in case of fire. The pupils listened with respectful attention until he came to his final instructions, then smiles and giggles disturbed the principal's serenity.

"Above all things," he said, "if your clothing catches fire, remain cool."

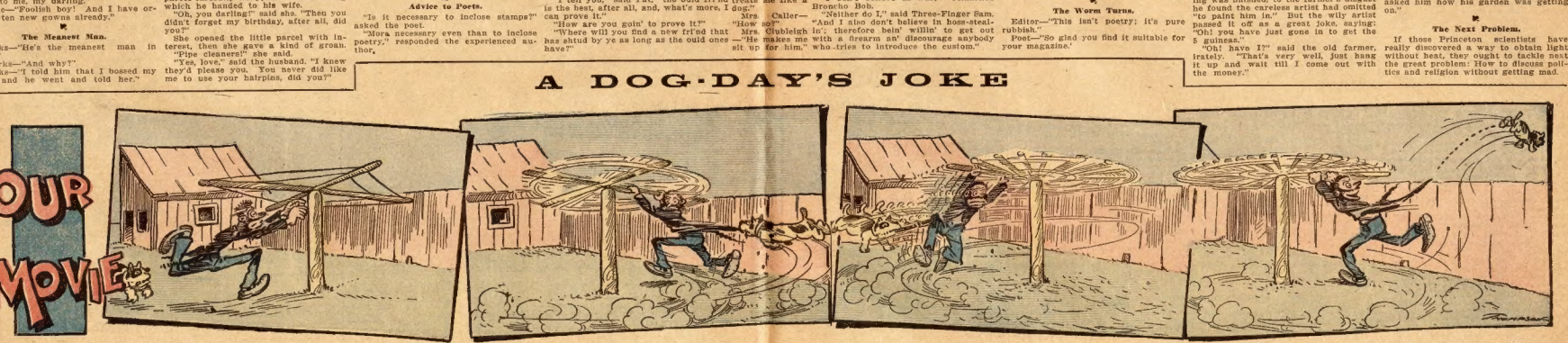
First Suburbanite—"Did he raise anything in his garden last year?"

Second Suburbanite—"Not a thing, only his hat when the women passed by and asked him how his garden was getting on."

The Next Problem.

If those Princeton scientists have really discovered a way to obtain light, without heat, they ought to tackle next the great problem: How to discuss politics and religion without getting mad.

A DOG-DAY'S JOKE



Frayed Frederick—"Gee, dis clothes-hoss looks like a life saver! It's me for it!"

"Are yeh follerin', yeh big mutt? Hold on tight an' I'll give yeh a free ride!

"Aroun' an' aroun' an' aroun' we go! When the dorg's hold breaks he's a goner!

"Good-by, purp! I always knew these clothes-hosses was good for somethin' and this is it!"

The Serpent's Bride

Or, An Indian Secret

By Arthur Preston Hankins

[Copyright 1917 by W. D. Boyce Co.]

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CHAPTER X. (Continued.)

THE scientist eyed him coldly, calculatingly. Then came his chuckling snort. "Tut, tut, Dillon! You're all worked up about nothing. A gopher snake can't harm the girl."

"I know. It isn't that altogether. But I—I just don't want her mixed up in such foolishness. I——d—n it, I don't like it!"

"Tut, tut!" soothed Peebles, in no kindly tone. "Don't be unreasonable. We have a ticklish piece of business ahead of us. You must keep your head. And we must be getting to that round house, too. I fancy they will take the bride there at once."

Peebles led the way on hands and knees. Monte lingered to cast one glance back at the dance ground.

Night was close upon them. He could barely make out in the dim light Sha-wy-kut-wut and Tush-mal proceeding slowly in the direction of one of the kivas, the other maids and priests following and lifting their voices in a chant. Sha-wy-kut-wut carried a ladder, each rung trimmed with a bunch of red feathers.

Monte hurried after Peebles. They reached the trail. Monte took the lead. Stooping, scraped and stung by the prickly bushes, they forged ahead. They were over fifteen minutes on the trail. When at length they reached the round house and drew back into the thicket there was silence on every side. From the distance now came the faint, weird chanting.

"She's already inside," groaned Monte. "They've gone away and left her. And they've taken the ladder. Peebles——"

"Keep still!" ordered the ethnologist. "We don't know who may be about."

Cautiously he peered from the bushes, Monte at his elbow. For five minutes they made no move. Then, as all remained silent in the vicinity of the round house, they stole softly out.

Darkness had descended. So long as no Indian came near the oval house there was little danger of detection. Peebles flashed his flashlight. Monte's fingers groped feverishly over the adobe wall and found the plugs of mud.

He had a round, blunt stick in readiness. He pushed on the upper plug, quickly withdrawing the stick when the pressure ceased. He passed the stick to Peebles and, with a beating heart, placed his eye to the upper hole, while Peebles worked at the lower one.

Light flashed in Monte's eyes. The lid of the house was off, he reasoned, for smoke trailed straight upward and did not spread thru the interior.

Little Tush-mal, washed of her weird paint and dressed as he was wont to see her, was bound to the post, the rope wound round her body several times. Her eyes were closed. On her lips an odd, pathetic smile. Monte's tension tightened.

He felt Peebles pressed close to him. "Is it she?" came the scientist's voice. "Thru this hole I can see only her bare feet, the fire, the basket and the snake."

The snake! Monte pushed Peebles away and pressed his eye to the hole slanting downward.

He saw the fire, a small one of short boughs, close to the post. Tush-mal, from her knees down, was visible. Her legs and feet were bare and no ropes encircled them. Close to her feet was the basket she had fashioned with so much painstaking labor. It was inverted. On top of it was a stone. What was under it, thus imprisoned? The snake? No—not ten feet from her lay a lone huge reptile, asleep, it seemed, in the warmth of the fire.

"My God, what a hideous farce!" groaned the saddle tramp.

"She's a beautiful girl," Peebles, at the upper hole, whispered suddenly. "I can't blame you, Dillon."

Monte paid little heed. Thru the lower hole he had seen a sudden movement of the snake. It whipped its tail about from one side to the other, then lay passive again. It was a huge reptile, thick, repulsive. Monte couldn't recall having seen a gopher snake so large. But the light from the flickering fire was poor; he could make out few details.

He was sick at heart—sick of the whole fantastic business! He regretted his part in it. Why hadn't he refused? The Indians had always been his friends. Up until now he had respected their religious views. What right had he to meddle? Never before in his life had he cared for money. Now the chance of making a thousand dollars had turned him into a Judas, a loathsome deceiver, a slinking eavesdropper, a prier into that most sacred thing, the religion of another. But this was the end of it! He was thru! He——"

Again the reptile whipped its tail, twice this time, back and forth. It raised its head. There came a low noise.

Monte put his ear to the hole, waited—a century, it seemed.

Then again came the sound that brought his beating heart into his throat. It was a low, clicking noise. Monte had often heard it in the spring of the year, after the winter rains. It was the warning of a rattlesnake, whose rattles are soggy with water.

Instantly he knew he had been deceived. Sha-wy-kut-wut knew that Monte was his rival, that little Tush-mal had chosen another. And this was his hideous primitive revenge. Pretending to his people that the girl was to be inclosed with a harmless gopher snake, as was the custom, he had substituted this deadly rattler, soaking its rattles in water to deaden its sharp alarm. The girl was to be sacrificed before his very eyes!

Cold sweat broke out on his forehead. His heart sank, and he grew weak as a girl. Then strength and determination came to him. But what could he do?

He drew his Colt and foolishly placed the muzzle to the hole. Instantly he knew how silly this act was. Even if he could see to shoot, hitting the reptile under the circumstances would be a feat little short of marvelous.

"Peebles! Peebles!" he groaned hoarsely. "It's a rattler! I heard him. My God, what can we do? Boost me up on your shoulders—— I'll try to reach the hole in the roof. Quick!"

"Dillon, what——"

"Don't question me! Do as I say! I tell you the girl's tied in there with a rattlesnake!"

Peebles, always calm in emergency, stooped and let Monte climb to his shoulders. He stood erect with his burden.

"Steady, now—— I'm going to spring."

And sprawling up the smooth round surface went the saddle tramp.

His clutching fingers did not reach within a foot of the hole. Down he slid, crashing astride Peebles' neck.

"Useless!" he desponded. "Let me look again."

He stooped at the lower hole.

To his horror, the rattler, now greatly enraged at something, was wriggling nearer to the girl. Its blunt tail was whipping from side to side. The rattles were erect. Again came that low, deadened warning, scarcely audible. It coiled and struck at nothing, darting fully four feet. Back it struck in the other direction, not stopping to coil. The flat, repulsive head was always erect; the body was always active. There was no doubt of it now, the reptile was enraged and bent on death.

Not a movement did he see of the little brown feet so close to the poisonous fangs.

"I'll kill that Indian! I'll kill him! I'll kill him! Oh, my God! Peebles, the axes!—the axes!"

They were on the ground, at the edge of the thicket. Monte darted after them. Peebles grasped one from his hands. They began hacking at the adobe wall.

"Hurry, man, hurry!" Monte urged desperately.

Blow after blow they rained. The dust of the adobe rattled down. Then sparks flew. Monte's ax had struck stone. An instant more and Peebles' encountered the same substance.

"It's stone inside!" cried the scientist. "Only an adobe shell over a wall of stones!"

Monte kept on chopping at the ungiving flint in a paroxysm of despair.

"My God!" he moaned. "Work, man—work! Don't you understand? I love her! I love her! My God, it'll kill me!"

"Stop!" Peebles ordered. "You're only wasting your strength. You can't cut that stone. There must be some other way."

"But I bored holes thru it, didn't I! It's not solid rock. Work on! Work on!"

"It's so nearly solid," puffed Peebles, "that we can't hope to——"

The bit of Monte's ax broke sharp off on the protruding edge of a stone. With a groan of anguish he dropped it, and, in the fascination of despair, again placed his eye to the lower hole.

The great rattler now was directly before the girl's feet. It had coiled. Its erect head was slowly swaying from side to side. He closed his eyes in horror; then open they sprang again.

Something long and twinkling in the firelight flashed across the floor. It darted straight at the angry reptile. It resembled a wire more than anything else. The snake struck at the girl, missed, coiled again at her right side.

Monte placed his lips to the hole.

"Tush-mal! Tush-mal!" he cried. "Lift your feet! It's a rattler! My God, lift your feet! It is I—Monte. I'm trying—trying to get to you! Trying!—but, oh, God, I can't! I can't!"

From within came her voice faintly. With his ear to the hole he heard:

"And hast thou come at last to take me with thee, mi vaquero?"

"Yes! Yes, little Humming Bird!" he screamed back at her. "I love thee! My God, too late I love thee, Tush-mal!"

Again came her voice. He listened.

"If thou lovest me, Monte, put thy eye once more to the lower hole and watch."

His clutching fingers sprawled over the wall. His eye was once more glued to the lower hole.

Still the fire gleamed. Still the bright wire, as he thought it, twinkled across the floor toward the snake. Still the flat head of the reptile was raised, evil, menacing, swaying from side to side. Any instant it would spring again.

But the little brown right foot of Tush-mal was creeping stealthily toward the basket on her left. The toes touched the rock on top of it, and pushed it off. Immediately the basket began bobbing up and down. Under its rim now went the little toes. The great toe and the second to it clutched the basket's edge as dexterously as fingers.

Suddenly the foot was lifted. The basket came with it. Out wriggled two long slim, snakes, spotted evenly in black and white.

The rattler, on the other side, sprang, missed again. It stretched, writhing, before the girl. Toward it rapidly wriggled the black-and-white reptiles. In an instant the three were a struggling mass, fighting to the death, twining and intertwining, hissing, lashing their tails.

Monte sank to the ground, weak as a fainting woman.

"King snakes!" he laughed childishly. "Peebles! Peebles! For God's sake, laugh! Ha, ha, ha!" he roared insanely. "She had king snakes under the basket, Peebles. And when I said I loved her, she turned 'em loose. Lord, man, look and tell me what you see!"

There was a space of silence; then came Peebles' unruffled voice:

"The black-and-white snakes are wrapped about the rattler, Dillon. And they're literally crushing him to death."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came the maniacal laughter of the saddle tramp, and he rolled on the ground. "When I said I loved her, she said, 'Look thru the hole.' And she lifted the basket with her toes—and—Oh, ha, ha, ha, ha! Laugh, Peebles—d—n it, laugh!"

CHAPTER XI.

HELLO! This the Lone Fir Rancho? . . . Who is this speaking, please? . . . Oh, hello! That you, Jess? Say, this is Monte Dillon. Say, Jess, tell the old man I'm on my way to the ranch. Leaving in an hour, now. I'll take the job."

"Good boy!" came Jess Cameron's voice in the receiver at Monte's ear. "The old man'll be tickled to death."

"And, Jess—er—I'd—Well, I guess I'd better tell you. I'll have with me—er—now—that is, I'm about to be married, Jess. I'll bring my wife with me. And—er—just break the news gently to——"

"What's that? Married! Who's the unfortunate female?"

"Do you remember the little Indian girl I told you about? The one I saw up on Yunque when we had the bunch of yearlings up——"

"Say, you're a liar!"

"No—straight goods, Jess! Just tell the boys, Jess, to——"

"Oh, I'll tell the boys! Don't worry young fella. And say—what we'll do to you——"

Monte clicked the receiver on the hook.

He had been to the engineers' camp once since the ceremony on the mountain to get his pack burro; but Idona Rivers had been driving with Adolph Neasmith and he hadn't seen her. Now he called up the store at Palinqua, and soon a messenger had brought the girl to the other end of the wire. Then followed:

"Mr. Dillon! Why, how do you do?"

"Why—why, I'm quite well, thank you. I—I just wanted to say good——"

"Aren't you coming over soon? I've something to tell you. I think I ought to—we've been such good friends."

"No, I'm—I'm afraid I can't come. I'm leaving for the Lone Fir today. I——"

"Is that so? Too bad. You're taking the foreman position, then, after all. I was wishing I might see you again. I wanted one more spree with you before I go back East."

"Back East!"

"Yes—Adolph is fidgety all the time I'm out here. So, we're all going back—Adolph, Grace, and I. So my sprees are over, Monte. Adolph and I are to be married in——"

"What! Who? You and that——and Mr. Neasmith?"

"To be sure. It's all the rage nowadays. Didn't I tell you? It has been decided for ten years that we would marry some day. He's just an old dear, that's what he is! Can't you congratulate me, Monte?"

Monte tried to, but finished in a choking "good-by," and hung the receiver on the hook.

He was thoughtful as he walked from the store down toward the little hut at the edge of the sycamores, hidden in its nest of morning glories. But his thoughtfulness ended in a burst of laughter, and he mumbled something about somebody being an irreclaimable ass.

Since the snake ceremony on the mountain he had been with Peebles in his machine to San Diego, the county seat, from whence he had returned with a marriage license. The shiny-faced padre was now waiting in the hut of

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Being made in a solid piece it has no joints to catch dirt, contagious germs or to retain greasy substances. The metal of which it is constructed prohibits rust, and although far lighter, is will outlast the best wire strainer.

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Tush-mal's mother to make Monte and the little Humming Bird man and wife And Peebles was waiting, too.

It was soon over. Monte had kissed his bride. Peebles was grasping his hand. Sha-wy-kut-wut stood gloomily at one side, his arms folded across his breast, his dark head bent. When it was over he silently walked out the door.

"It was the long trail after all, my boy," said the ethnologist. "Well, success should be yours. As I told you long ago, there are other successes in this world besides money kings. And a man must follow his inclinations to make a success of anything. I'm a rover myself—er—Monte, and I've warmed toward you. I'll be over to see you one of these days. Make cattle raising your hobby, Monte—it's as good and honorable as anything. Well, when Tush-mal has explained the business on the mountain to you, write me all about it. I'm terribly curious."

He passed the saddle tramp a check. Monte shook his head. "I can't take it, Mr. Peebles. No—and don't be angry with me—now I feel that it would burn my fingers. I've been an ass, Mr. Peebles. An ass and a dirty——"

"Tut, tut!" interrupted Peebles. And without another word he tore up the check.

"It's yours, Dillon, and I'd be glad to give it. But—well, I don't know but I admire you more for refusing it. Good-by, Monte, I must be going."

At dusk Sargento trudged along the dusty road which led from Unal toward the Lone Fir Rancho. In the silver-mounted saddle rode little Tush-mal, softly humming to herself. Monte marched at the pony's side. Behind trailed the weary pack burro. The little caravan was just leaving the reservation. On the cool evening air floated that weird, indescribable Indian odor which filled the saddle tramp's thoughts with trails and camps, and the life that is close to nature's heart.

"Tell me, little Humming Bird," Monte said in Spanish. "Tell me now. Thou promised, but hast not told."

Her laugh came ripplingly, clear and tinkling as the voice of a mountain stream.

"All the time, Monte," she said, "I knew thou wert deceiving me. There was for me love in thy heart, but the white girl had used her tengalish and put a spell upon thee. Still I was not afraid. I waited.

"Sha-wy-kut-wut knew why he of the sharp gray eyes had come among us. Then when he saw thee with him, he knew thou, too, had come for a purpose. He followed thee every time when thou came to see me in my home. He told me thou wert false.

"Then, to prove it to me, he told me to tell thee all that thou wished to know about the ceremony. I did so. And when thou left me that night he came for me, and we followed thee to the booth of the sharp-eyed one in the ramada. We heard thee telling him what thou hadst learned from me. Then thou came creeping, sprang at Sha-wy-kut-wut, and fell over me. My shoulder was much bruised, Monte; but my heart was bruised the more.

"Then the Whisperer followed thee to the mountaintop, when thou went seeking the round house of the rattlesnake and his bride. He crouched in the bushes and saw thee bore the little holes. He followed thee to thy camp.

"There, at night while thou slept, he took the boring tools and made one other little hole in the house of Showut poche-daka and his bride. This hole, Monte, was on the other side from yours, and close to the earth. When it was bored Sha-wy-kut-wut returned the tools to thy saddle.

"It was to test thy love, mi vaquero, that Showut poche-daka himself, instead of a harmles gopher snake, was placed in the house with me. Sha-wy-kut-wut had soaked his rattles in water, that my people might not know the danger that threatened me. He and I decided it. He said thy love for me was dead. I said 'no.' To prove it, we did as thou wert witness to. Sha-wy-kut-wut said that, if thou showed thy love when thou saw my danger, he would give me to thee.

"On the other side of the round house he placed himself when thou and the sharp-eyed one had crept to the little holes. With a long wire, thru the hole he had bored close to the earth, Sha-wy-kut-wut worried Showut poche-daka till he grew angry and would sink his horrid fangs in me.

"But I was right, my Monte, and the Whisperer was wrong. All the time thou didst love me, but knew it not. And when thou saidst so then with such agony in thy voice, with my toes I lifted the basket and released the king snakes, who fear not Showut poche-daka, but crush the life from him when they meet him in the road."

"But, Tush-mal!" cried Monte. "If I had not cried my love!—then what?"

"Then," she said softly, "my toes would not have lifted the basket to loose the king snakes. One time Showut poche-daka would not have missed. And neither thou nor Sha-wy-kut-wut would have had a bride. The Whisperer did not know—that was my secret alone. But what would I care, Monte, if thou wert lost to me?

"For, my love, have I not waited for thee all my life? Death would I crave without thee. Wert thou not promised to me when thou wert but a little boy? Thy mother and my mother made the pact—that the child of each should wed. When I first saw thee on the mountain, something whispered thou wert my promised love. And later the old man, To-ma-wut, told me it was true."

"But, Tush-mal, I don't understand. You're such a dreamer, little Humming Bird!"

"My dreams come true," she laughed. "But To-ma-wut told me, not long since, that perhaps thou didst not remember thy mother. And that thy father, too, died when thou wert a little boy. Thy father sent thee away when thou wert still very young. It was whispered that he did not wish thee to know thy mother was of my people. Thy father, Monte, married my mother's sister's daughter. Thou art my second cousin, vaquero. The white girl with the brown hair and eyes, Monte, would not love the Indian blood that runs in thy veins. Thou wert all along for me, mi vaquero—no other had the right to thee."

"Is this true?" he asked in wondering tones.

"Si, si, vaquero," she answered softly. He stepped close to the pony and took his bride in his arms.

"Thank God!" he cried. "Now I know—now I understand the shame that is not mine when men see me naked; why I hate cities and all the hypocrites that dwell in them. I understand the odor that makes me restless—and why I love thee above all else, little Humming Bird."

The End.

What Maria Knew.

"Maria," declared the red-headed man, addressing his wife, "what we need is efficiency in the home. Now I have brought home a booklet telling you how to economize."

"You can read me some of it while I go ahead with my knitting," responded the red-headed man's wife.

"It says here," said the man, "that in many households 25 to 50 per cent of the grub is left uneaten, which is a very high percentage."

"Certainly," answered the wife addressed as Maria, glancing over her husband's shoulder and scanning some recipes, "and I suppose that by serving the viands enumerated the percentage of uneaten food can be materially raised."

"'Drippings of pork, veal, chicken and beef may be clarified and the fat from bacon, ham and sausage can be used as saute, and oleomargarine is a good substitute for butter, and you may color it to suit yourself if that will make it seem any better to you——'"

"A good idea," commented the wife, counting her stitches. "It doesn't suggest any special color, but I suppose yellow would be best. Red, white and blue would be too extravagant, I imagine."

"Let me read you this recipe," continued the man. "Gee, I'm glad I picked up this book! Here's a chance to find out what's in chili con carne. I always did want to know."

"Ignorance is bliss," commented Maria. "What's that over on the other page? Is it 'scrapple'? Read it."

"'Scrapple—One can of rice, two tubfuls of butter, half an onion, one case of tomato juice, one thimbleful of paprika——'"

"Just a minute. That's one cup of rice. C stands for cup, not can. And it's two tablespoonfuls of butter, not tubs, and a teaspoonful of paprika, not a thimbleful. Now read about 'risoto.'"

"'One pail of pickled prunes—no, no—one pile of pickled prunes—no, no—one pan of pickled prunes——'"

"Pint!"

"Maria, old dear," said the man admiringly, "I'll bet that the ginks who got out this book don't know half as much as you do about cooking!" and he tossed the book into his wife's lap right in the midst of the knitting, and announced that he was going out to hoe the spuds.

It Wasn't News.

A young man recently called on the Rev. H. A. Kirk of Muncie, Ind., and, after introducing himself, shyly remarked that he was going to be married. Would the minister perform the ceremony on a certain evening of the next week? The minister would.

Just before leaving the visitor assumed an embarrassed look, explaining that he had ridden into the city on a bicycle from the country, that he had broken the sprocket chain, and that he had neglected to put any money in his pocket when he left home. Would the minister lend him 35 cents to have it repaired so that he could ride home? Certainly, the minister would.

The evening of the expected marriage arrived, but no bridegroom and bride. Neither did they come the next nor any other evening. The Rev. Mr. Kirk concluded that he had been swindled. He told the story at a meeting of Muncie ministers. They smiled. They also had given up 35 cents to the young man who was to be married.

Courier of Soldier and Civilian

Our troops are now on the firing line in France. While at home every instrumentality of our government and private industry is being urged at top speed to insure victory. The telephone is in universal demand as courier, bringing to the front men and the materials of war.

From the farms the telephone courier brings foodstuffs; from the mines the telephone courier calls forth metals; from the factories this courier gathers manufactured products. The telephone courier leads troop and supply trains to the front; summons fighting flotillas and transports; and, in fact, leads practically every contributing unit of supply to the firing line.

At such a time, when the government is straining at its task and every industry is loyally contributing its energy, this national courier is constantly being used to call up the reserves. It is at the base of every contributing activity.

The right of way must be given to the military for the direction of troops and to the government for the marshaling of endless supplies. To do this, and also make the telephone serve all other needs, both patriotic and private, all must economize.

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One of our leaders. We save you money on Groceries—catalogue free with trial order. The requests for catalogues are enormous and hundreds of thousands of dollars are lost annually by mail order concerns in sending out catalogues to places where no benefit is ever derived. To avoid all this **unnecessary** expense and be in position to sell our goods at the lowest possible price, we have decided on the following plan: We will only send our Bargain Grocery Catalogue to such people who can prove to us that they are really interested in saving money on groceries. We quote herewith a few of the bargains listed and which are sold in different parts of our catalogue.

FLOUR—$10.36 per Barrel

(One of Our Leaders)

Our Best Flour	$10.36	per barrel
" " "	5.18	per half barrel
" " "	2.59	per 49-lb sack
" " "	1.30	per 24½-lb. sack

SUGAR—$5.00 per 100 lbs.

(One of Our Leaders)

Our Best Granulated Sugar	$5.00	per 100 lbs.
" " "	2.50	per 50 lbs.
" " "	1.25	per 25 lbs.
" " "	.50	per 10 lbs.

Other Big Bargains in Our Catalogue

Uneeda Biscuits, 12 pkgs. 40c
Quaker Oats, 4 large pkgs. 36c
AND OTHER BIG BARGAINS

Here Is Our Plan

Send us $1.99 for the following Trial Order and we will then know that your mean business and we will include with your order our Bargain Grocery Catalogue in which you will find big grocery bargains.

TRIAL ORDER MN

	(Estimated) Our Retail Price	Price
5 lbs. Our Best Granulated Sugar	.50c	25c
1 large size pkg. Quaker Oats	.10c	7c
1 lb. Guaranteed Baking Powder	.50c	39c
¼-lb. Black Pepper (Ground)	.25c	15c
¼-lb. Cinnamon (Ground)	.25c	15c
¼-lb. Ginger (Ground)	.25c	15c
¼-lb Mustard (Ground)	.25c	15c
2 bars American Family Soap	.16c	9c
2 pkgs. Uneeda Biscuits	.16c	8c
1 bar Fels Naphtha Soap	.5c	3c
1 lb. Breakfast Cocoa	.60c	39c
3 pkgs. Washing Powder	15c	9c
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An Eye for Bargains.

"Sire," said the grand vizier of a certain Oriental potentate, "I suggest that in the future we buy our automobiles from the Western company that has just offered us 30 per cent discount."

"Good!" said the potentate. "Order a consignment of five hundred automobiles, assorted sizes, at once, and tell the company to send us a check for the discount by return mail, and the bill will be settled in due course."

Mistakes Will Happen.

A woman doctor of Philadelphia was calling on a young sister, recently married, who was in distress. In response to the doctor's inquiry the newly-wed said:

"I cooked a meal for the first time yesterday, and I made an awful mess of it."

"Never mind, dearie," said the doctor, cheerfully; "it's nothing to worry about. I lost my first patient."

Hard to Tell.

First Credit Man—"How about Jones of Pigville Center?"

Second Credit Man—"He always pays cash, so we don't know how honest he is!"

REVELATION.

Oh, language is a curious thing,
And strange results its use may bring.
The more we talk the more we show
How many things we do not know.

Just So.

The following speech was made by an Irish barrister in behalf of his client whose cow had been killed by a train:

"If the train had been run as it should have been ran, or if the bell had been rung as it should have been rang, or if the whistle had been blown as it should have been blew, both of which they did neither, the cow would not have been injured when she was killed."

Classified Want Ads

Classified Want Ad Information

The rate for one insertion in Chicago Ledger and one insertion in The Saturday Blade is 30 cents a word, minimum 14 words; less 3% for cash. Each initial and group of figures is counted as a word, and the name and address are also counted. This is the minimum rate; neither more nor less is charged, irrespective of size of ad or number of insertions. An ad may appear in both publications of the same week, or in the Blade of one week and the Ledger of the next.

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AGENTS WANTED

ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD—IF this is not the greatest money-making house-to-house proposition. N. R. G. Laundry Tablets wash clothes in 10 minutes, without rubbing. Contains no lime, lye, paraffine, wax or other injurious chemical and cannot possibly injure the clothes or hands. Positively the wonder of the age—sells for 15c enough for five family washings. We supply free samples and guarantee the sale of every package you buy. Just leave the free sample with the housewife and, when you call again, she is eagerly awaiting to become your steady customer. Secure territorial rights at once or you will regret it. A 2c postal brings sample and full particulars. Farquhar-Moon Mfg. Co., Desk H205, 140 W. Vanburen St., Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS. WE NEED MEN AND WOMEN right now to take orders for world's greatest raincoat values. Dandy coat $3.98. Sixty-five fabrics. Dozens of styles. Made to measure and delivered direct from our big factory to your customer. No delivering. Front in advance. Easy to sell. Cooper making $300 monthly. Average $21.50 profit every days. Nearly 22 orders in 2 days. Four average orders a day gives you $2,500 a year profit. Full outfit and sample coat given. Write for wonderful offer. Comer Mfg. Co., Dept. B-15, Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS—STEADY INCOME. LARGE MANufacturer of Handkerchiefs and Dress Goods, etc., wishes representative in each locality. Factory to consumer. Big profits, honest goods. Whole or spare time. Credit given. Send for particulars. Freeport Mfg. Co., 52 Main St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

AGENTS—MAKE A DOLLAR AN HOUR. Sell Mendets, a patent patch for instantly mending leaks in all utensils. Sample package free. Collette Mfg. Co., Dept. 707-C, Amsterdam, N. Y.

AGENTS—EARN $75.00 A WEEK TAKING orders for our Buckeye Raincoats. Free sample and outfit. Write today. Buckeye Mfg. Co., J 1, Union Square, N. Y.

AGENTS — I'VE A NEW SOAP GAME that's a dandy. New stuff; 100% profits. Sample and full layout free. Write quick. Lacassian Co., Dept. 21, St. Louis, Mo.

PORTRAITS, MEDALLIONS, PHOTO PILlow tops, luminous crucifix, photo plates, frames, sheet pictures, papier mache frames, etc. Lowest prices; rejects credited; prompt shipments; 30 days' credit; catalog and samples free. Jas. C. Bailey, Desk W, Chicago.

AGENTS! QUICK SALES! BIG PROFITS! Outfit free! Cash or credit. Sales in every home for our beautiful Dress Goods, Silks, Mohair, Underwear, Rain Proof Dry Goods. Write today. National Importing & Mfg. Co., Dept. EA, 425 Broadway, New York.

YOU MAKE $5.00 ON EVERY $10.00 WORTH of orders. Apply for the local agency and sell our new money saving concentrated flavoring extracts and toilet articles direct to the homes. Allen Laboratories, 18 Remsen Street, Cohoes, N. Y.

AGENTS—JUST OUT. NEW DOLLAR winner. One-Hand Speed Wrench. Machinists, autoists, farmers, everybody buys at sight. 100% profit. Make $30 to $50 weekly. Toledo Speed Wrench Co., Dept. "B," Toledo, Ohio.

AGENTS—$60 A WEEK TO TRAVEL BY automobile and introduce our 300 candle power coal oil lantern. Write for particulars of our free auto offer. Thomas Co., 811 North St. Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS—NOW OUR MADE TO ORDER guaranteed $15.00 all wool $25.00 suits. No experience necessary. Wonderful selling plan. You furnish prospects, we make sale. Chicago Woolen Mills, Dept. 18, Chicago.

YOUNG MAN, WOULD YOU ACCEPT A tailormade suit just for showing it to your friends? Then write Banner Tailoring Co., Dept. 720, Chicago, and get beautiful samples, styles and a wonderful offer.

NEW PATRIOTIC WAR ATLAS FREE with my 1917 "Business Guide." Sells everywhere. Beginners clear $7 daily. 50% commission. Outfit free. Prof. Nichols, Box B 1, Naperville, Ill.

$1.95 FOR MEN'S MADE-TO-ORDER PANTS —worth $5.00. Sample free. Money-making offer for agents, part time or all. Write today. Chicago Tailors' Association, Dept. C 28, So. Franklin St. Chicago.

LARGE MANUFACTURER WANTS REPREsentative to sell shirts, underwear, hosiery, dresses, waists, skirts, direct to homes. Write for free samples. Madison Mills, 503 Broadway, New York City.

AGENTS WANTED—(Continued)

BIG TEXTILE MILLS WANT AMBITIOUS men and women everywhere to show latest dress fabrics, neckwear, hosiery, underwear and sweaters, 400 styles. Easy sales. Values beat stores. Many making over $30 weekly. All or spare time. Complete sample outfit starts you. Steadfast Mills, 18 Remsen St., Cohoes, N. Y.

GET DAVIS' "PROSPERITY OFFER," BEST in 21 years. $10 daily a cinch. Our products at one-half to one-third store prices cut cost of living making sales easy. E. M. Davis, Dept. 609, 910 Lake, Chicago.

MAIL ORDER BEGINNERS FIND VALUable information free by sending postal to The Universal Supply House, Box 1745-6, Los Angeles, Calif.

$90.00 MONTHLY, LEAVING "EASYWASH" on free with grocers everywhere. Particulars free. Rienzi, Cutler St., Newark, N. J.

AGENTS WANTED FEMALE

TRUSTWORTHY WOMEN MAKE MONEY IN spare time introducing priscilla fabrics, dresses, underwear, specialties, among friends. Beautiful samples furnished. Pitcharled Company, Department 179, Trenton, New Jersey.

HELP WANTED

CHIROPRACTIC DOCTORS MAKE LARGE incomes; our graduates earn $3,000 to $6,000 yearly; be independent; work for yourself; this big paying profession easily learned by correspondence; special rates now; illustrated book free. American University, Dept. 313, 162 N. Dearborn St., Chicago.

WANTED IMMEDIATELY — THOUSANDS men—women, 18 or over, for U. S. Government jobs. War means many vacancies. $100 month. Steady work. Life appointment. Write for list positions. Franklin Institute, Dept. G30, Rochester, N. Y.

EVERY READER OF THE LEDGER OUGHT to read these ads. Every week splendid chances to make money—to better yourself—to buy, sell or exchange goods or services, are offered here.

25 CENTS EACH, PAID FOR NAMES and addresses. Positively no fake. Send dime for contract. Arthur Andersen, Dept. E, Box 172, South Omaha, Nebr.

$35 WEEKLY COLLECTING NAMES AND addresses. Send stamp. Ursus Company, Dept. A, Chicago, Ill.

MALE HELP WANTED

GOVERNMENT RAILWAY MAIL, POST OFfice, rural carrier "exams" everywhere soon. Get prepared by former Government civil service examiner. Booklet free. Arthur Robert Patterson, Rochester, N. Y.

DON'T PREPARE FOR ANY CIVIL SERVice examination without seeing our catalogue. Washington Correspondence College, Washington, D. C.

FIREMEN, BRAKEMEN, BAGGAGEMEN, 8 hours, $140. Colored porters wanted everywhere. Experience unnecessary. 686 Ry. Bureau, East St. Louis, Ill.

$20.00 WEEKLY MADE WRITING NAMES for mail order houses. No canvassing. Particulars free. The Guide Company, Memphis, Tenn.

$100 MONTH PAID MEN—WOMEN. Government jobs. Write for list positions. Frank in Institute, Dept. G 28, Rochester, N. Y.

BE A DETECTIVE. EXCELLENT OPPORtunity, good pay, travel. Write C. T. Ludwig, 320 Westover Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

FIREMEN, BRAKEMEN, BEGINNERS $125. Railroads everywhere. Railway Association, Brooklyn, N. Y.

FEMALE HELP WANTED

SOLDIERS AND SAILORS NEED SOCKS. Good money made at home knitting hosiery. Machines furnished on time. We pay you fixed rates for making the goods the yarn round. Wheeler, Inc., F, 337 Madison, Chicago.

WOMEN TO SEW. GOODS SENT PREpaid to your door; plain sewing; steady work; no canvassing. Send stamped envelope for prices paid. Universal Co., Dept. 54, Philadelphia, Pa.

FIVE BRIGHT, CAPABLE LADIES TO travel, demonstrate and sell dealers. $25 to $50 per week. Railroad fare paid. Goodrich Drug Company, Dept. 85, Omaha, Neb.

$20 WEEKLY; STAMPING PATTERNS AT home. Send stamp. Chicago Silk Mills, Dept. M. M., Chicago.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

COAL IS HIGH AND WILL BE HIGHER next winter. Greatest invention yet solves coal problem. Every house a prospect. We need a representative in every district in the United States. Exclusive selling rights and handsome outfit furnished. Write immediately before your territory is taken. Cosmic Products Company, 355 Valentine St., St. Louis, Mo.

OKLAHOMA OIL. HAVE 80 ACRE LEASE shallow field. One well producing. Need money, drill more. Capital $10,000—shares $10.00. No promotion scheme. Real investment. Bank references. Send check now. H. & W. Oil Company, Phoenix Bld., Muskogee, Okla.

$20 BUYS DEED TO LAND, ALSO INTERest in oil well that should pay you $100 for every dollar invested; payments $1 monthly; complete information free. Address Texas-Gulf Company, 1105 Union Bank, Houston, Texas.

"RICHES IF YOU WANT THEM"—A REmarkable book, free; may prove your path to prosperity. Address E. A. Adey, 950 Hibernia Bldg., New Orleans, La.

INVEST IN GOLD AND SILVER MINES, showing promise of raising another crop of millionaires. Address, Midwest Investment Bureau, 682 Boston Block, Minneapolis, Minn.

WYOMING-MONTANA OIL FIELDS. LATest, most complete map free. W. J. Felt, 417 Stapleton Block, Billings, Mont.

REAL ESTATE

A SMALL FARM IN CALIFORNIA WILL make you more money with less work. You will live longer and better. Delightful climate. Rich soil. Hospitable neighbors. Good roads, schools and churches. Write for our San Joaquin Valley illustrated folders free. C. L. Seagraves, Industrial Commissioner. AT&SF Ry., 1931 Ry. Exch., Chicago.

MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

BUY THAT FARM HOME NOW. GOOD lands $15 to $35 per acre in Michigan's fruit belt. General farming, stock, dairying, poultry, vegetables, fruit. Towns, schools. Illustrated booklet free. George W. Swigart, Hoover, X1245 First Natl. Bank Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

OLD COINS WANTED

WILL PAY $10.00 TO $750.00 FOR CERTAIN $5.00 gold without motto. We want and offer cash premiums for all rare dollars, halves, quarters, dimes, nickles, cents, paper money and stamps. Send 4c now. Get our large coin circular. Numismatic Bank, Dept 13, Fort Worth, Texas.

MOVING PICTURE BUSINESS

$35.00 PROFIT NIGHTLY. SMALL CAPITAL starts you. Outfits sold on installments. No experience needed. Our machines are used and endorsed by Government. Big rewards. Make money. Get details now. Writer's Selling Service, Box 10, Auburn, N. Y.

SHORT STORIES WANTED

WRITERS!—STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, etc., are wanted for publication. Literary Bureau, B4, Hannibal, Mo.

SONGS, ETC.

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG. WE write music and guarantee publisher's acceptance. Submit poems on war, love or any subject. Chester Music Co., 1039 Wilson Ave., Suite 106, Chicago.

SONG POEMS

SONG WRITERS' "MANUAL AND GUIDE" free! We compose and facilitate free publication or sale. Submit poems. Knickerbocker Studios, 113 Gaiety Bldg., New York.

UNDERGROUND TREASURES

UNDERGROUND TREASURES — HOW AND where to find them. Particulars for stamp. Bee Company, Kansas City, Missouri.

PATENTS

PATENTS SECURED OR FEE RETURNED. Actual search and patentability report free. Send sketches and description, or model, of your invention. My patent sales service gets full value. 1917 edition ninety-page patent book free. George P. Kimmel, 260 Barrister Building, Washington, D. C.

WANTED, AN IDEA! WHO CAN THINK of some simple thing to patent? Protect your ideas; they may bring you wealth. Write for "Needed Inventions," "Patent Buyers," and "How to Get Your Patent and Your Money." Randolph & Co., Patent Attorneys, Dept. 174, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS THAT PROTECT. ADVICE AND books free. Highest references. Watson E. Coleman, Patent Lawyer, 624 F St., Washington, D. C.

INVENTIONS

INVENTIONS COMMERCIALIZED ON CASH and royalty basis. Inventors and manufacturers write at once. Adam Fisher Mfg. Co., 2044 Railway Exchange, St. Louis, Mo.

MISCELLANEOUS

SPECIAL TRIAL OFFER—YOUR NEXT Kodak film developed for 5c. Prints at 2c each. Moser & Son, 1921 St. James Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.

PERSONAL

MEN SUFFERING WITH CHRONIC DISeases and discouraged, should consult Dr. Rowe, a successful specialist, 113 North Pearl St., Buffalo, N. Y. Married or single, get in touch with him; he can help you. Forget past failures. Question blank and confidential advice free. Write today.

MARRY RICH—FOR QUICK RESULTS, JOIN our club. Thousands worth from $1,000 to $50,000 desire early marriages; particulars and photos free. Sealed. Confidential. Either sex. Standard Club, Box 610, Grayslake, Ill.

WEAK, NERVOUS, RUN DOWN MEN; REmember, we cure chronic, nervous, blood, kidney, bladder and skin diseases. Book, symptom blank and advice free sealed. Dr. Meyers, 316 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis, Minn.

EVERY READER OF THE LEDGER OUGHT to read these ads. Every week splendid chances to make money—to better yourself—to buy, sell or exchange goods or services, are offered here.

ARE YOU BASHFUL, SELF-CONSCIOUS? Embarrassed in company? These troubles overcome. Write for particulars. Correspondence confidential. A. O. Veritas, 1400 Broadway, New York.

MEN—COIN MONEY, SELL PICTURES MEN like. 6-25c, 12-50c, 36-$1.00. State age. Paris Art Co., D, Kalamazoo, Mich. Terms with orders.

SIXTH AND SEVENTH BOOK OF MOSES, Egyptian Secrets and many other rare books. Catalog 2c. Star Novelty Co., E 201, Camden, N. J.

MAGIC WORDS! SECRET, SURE METHOD of obtaining anything you want. Postpaid for dime. Lida Smedley, 141 Miller, Brooklyn, N. Y.

MARRY — FREE PHOTOS, BEAUTIFUL ladies; descriptions and directory; pay when married, New Plan Co., Dept. 21, Kansas City, Mo.

MARRY—MARRIAGE DIRECTORY WITH photos and description free. Pay when married. The Exchange, Dept. 28, Kansas City, Mo.

BIG MARRIAGE PAPER WITH NAMES, addresses, descriptions and photos, 25c; no rich widow fakes. Wren, 46 Grand Rapids, Mich.

MARRIAGE PAPER WITH NAMES, ADdresses, photos, descriptions. 4 months, 10c. Box 2265 B, Boston, Mass.

GET MARRIED — BEST MATRIMONIAL paper published. Free for stamp. Correspondent, Toledo, Ohio.

SECRETS, MAGIC, MYSTERY, MIND READing. Send only 20c for this $1 book. Send now. D. Union Book Co., Palatine, Ill.

MARRY RICH. HUNDREDS ANXIOUS TO marry. Descriptions and photos free. E. Unity, Grand Rapids, Mich.

MARRIAGE PAPER FREE; BEST PUBlication for sure results; reliable. Eastern Agency, 55, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

NAMES, ADDRESSES, DESCRIPTIONS OF girls desiring marriage. Dime and stamp. Select Club, 555, Yates Center, Kansas.

"FROM THE BALL ROOM TO HELL" mailed anywhere, 25c. L. E. Muncy, 136 E. Pleasant Ave., Syracuse, N. Y.

MARRIAGE PAPER—PHOTOS, DESCRIPtions, many rich, sent free. H. Jahn, St. Paul, Minn.

PRETTY "MISS GEORGIA" IN TWO FAScinating poses, 10c. Catalog free. Rick Company, Longsport, Ind.

LADIES—IF YOU ARE MATRIMONIALLY inclined send us your description. American Distributor, Blairsville, Pennsylvania.

VERY ATTRACTIVE PICTURES OF BEAUtiful bathing girls. 10c each, 3 for 25. Oriental Art Co., 6525 Ellis Ave., Chicago, Ill.

WIDOW, WORTH $95,000, ALSO WEALTHY young daughter, will marry honorable gentlemen. Answer quick. R. C., Box 884, Los Angeles, Cal.

DIVORCE AND MARRIAGE LAWS EVERY State. Send $1.00. Box K-568, Reno, Nevada.

Chicago Ledger

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Back numbers of the Ledger promptly mailed. Always give the dates desired, plainly written, accompanied by your full address. Price 5 cents per copy.

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READERS WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS

Silence is a difficult argument to beat.

Love and pain are more or less chummy.

Facts are stubborn things that never apologize.

The loser of the game is never accused of cheating.

Lots of men who have an aim in life lack ambition.

It's the heartfelt welcome of the dog that tells the tail.

Blessed are they who know enough to let well enough alone.

No man who has never been tempted is sure of his honesty.

Some people can best make their presence felt by their absence.

The crusty old bachelor if consistent would make his own bread.

Only those on the lower part of the wheel are in favor of revolution.

Thru a man's tongue we get a glimpse of his brain—or lack thereof.

Faint heart often wins a fair lady—with a little assistance on her part.

It's foolish to worry about the things you can help or the things you can't.

Alas for those heads that feel light only when the owner has a heavy load on!

The truth that occupies a nutshell finds some minds too narrow to give it room.

Never give up—unless it's a lonely spot and the other fellow has a sandbag or a revolver.

Women seldom take back their unkind words unless they want to use them over again.

The enthusiast who dives to the bottom of pleasure brings up more gravel than pearls.

The best brand of conversation is made up of truth, good sense, good humor and a dash of wit.

The only man who doesn't make a fool of himself occasionally is the one that nature saved the trouble.

If Noah had let the building of the ark to a Government contractor the flood would have been postponed indefinitely.

The average wife can outdo an experienced lawyer when it comes to cross-questioning her husband on his return about 2 a. m.

There are numerous cures for rheumatism, and it usually lingers long enough to give the victim a chance to try all of them.

It is a woman's privilege to wear short-sleeved dresses if she wants to. The Constitution of the United States says that the right to bear arms shall not be infringed.

War and Women

THE SONG OF THE STARS.

The song of the Stars is Freedom,
Sung in the fields of blue,
While Night over scenes of carnage
Sheds tears of pitying dew.

The Stars in the East sing "Freedom!
Freedom on land and sea!"
The Stars in the West shout—"Freedom!
The nations must be free!"

The clear, cold Stars of the Northland
O'er icy barriers call—
The Southern Stars uniting—
"Freedom! Freedom for all!"

The song rings loud 'mid the battle
Thrilling the allied host,
And loyal souls take up the cry—
"Freedom! at any cost!"

O Stars that ever for the right
Fight with the sons of men,
Shine on! Sing on your nightly song
Thru tongue and sword and pen!

No proud lord's blood-mad tyranny
Shall bind the human soul—
No scheme of man's contriving
Shall keep it from its goal.

The Law of Love is Liberty—
Sing them your triumph song
O Stars of Morn and Evening!
"The Day" will not be long.
—Helen Hawtherne

Noted Women Workers.

While the Council of National Defense was mobilizing the masculine brains of the country to aid in winning the war, Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur, president of Stanford University, who has charge of the national registration of women, was gathering a remarkable group of women to urge food-saving as a means to the same end. Their headquarters are in the Food Conservation Department at Washington.

Perhaps the best known of these women of wide renown is Ida M. Tarbell, editor, who gives two hours of her time each day to aid in the good work. Also she follows her own preachings and eats each day at her desk several meatless sandwiches, washed down with a glass of milk. Miss Tarbell's career is generally known. She has degrees from Allegheny College in Meadville, Pa., Knox College and a few others; she was a student at the Sorbonne in Paris and the College of Paris; she has served as associate editor of the Chautauquan, of McClure's Magazine, of the American Magazine, and has written many books.

Doing splendid work in the publicity department of the Food Conservation Bureau is Katherine Leckie, probably the first woman to take out naturalization papers in this country, by way of a suffrage argument, and the first woman reporter to "cover" the police court and city hall "run" in Chicago. Since then Miss Leckie has been an editor in charge of women's magazines. More recently she has been a publicity expert, and it was she who carried to a successful conclusion the campaign to raise the $400,000 sent to France to help care for the orphans of the Marne.

Just outside Dr. Wilbur's door can be found Miss Tessie Tag, business manager of the Stanford Palo Alto News, graduate of Stanford University, secretary of publicity in that institution for four years, now acting as private secretary to Dr. Wilbur. She is proud that she can "throw into type" a late ad, help "make up" her own paper and go out and "hustle" to get advertising for it.

Heading the advisory committee on home economics—the committee that prepared the home placard and which will cooperate with Mr. Hoover in instructing the housewives how they may save to the best advantage—is Dr. Alice C. Boughton, who has many college degrees, has written books, articles and monographs on house economy, and has conducted domestic science courses in the Teachers' College, Columbia University, at the Iowa State College of Agriculture, at the William Penn high school of Philadelphia, also the Star Center Association, the Home and School League and the School for Women in the same city, and the Cleveland Foundation in Cleveland. For two years she lived in Switzerland, and in 1912 she studied school lunches in seven countries of Europe.

When Salem, Mass., was almost entirely destroyed by fire and 20,000 persons were made homeless, Mrs. Montanye Perry studied the methods of relief undertaken in their behalf and wrote a history of the work which is considered a manual among social workers for handling similar catastrophes. Before that she had written special articles and fiction for magazines, among them the Delineator, To-Day's Housewife, McCall's, Farmer's Wife and the Woman's Magazine. She is the author of several novels. Just now she is doing good work in the publicity department of the Food Administration.

The first of June, Mrs. Ethel Hamilton Sanford, a prominent Western suffragist, anxious to do her bit for food conservation, undertook the organization of the stenographic department of Herbert Hoover's Food Administration in Washington. A half-dozen stenographers composed the force at that time. The equipment was a few desks, bare rooms and meager supplies. Thru the efficient management of Mrs. Sanford the Food Administration now has a splendidly organized and equipped force of more than a hundred stenographers, typists and mimeograph operators.

There is probably no woman in the United States who is qualified to speak with greater authority upon vital subjects dealing with the lives of women and children than is Mrs. Harriot Stanton Blatch, daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the pioneer advocate of woman's rights. Mrs. Blatch was born in Seneca Falls, N. Y., the cradle of the woman suffrage movement, was graduated from Vassar College in 1878, taking honors in mathematics. She then studied abroad, in Berlin and at the Sorbonne in Paris, where she took her second degree in economics. In 1915 she visited France and England to study the economic conditions of the women in time of war. Her old associations with these countries gave her special opportunities to get in touch with realities.

Few women of wealth have given so much of their time and money to accomplish personal work and study in behalf of the poor, and especially for the betterment of the conditions of women and children as Mrs. Mina C. Van Winkle of Newark, N. J. She has worked among the poor for fifteen years, after having been graduated from the New York School of Philanthropy.

In charge of the files of the Food Conservation Department is Miss Florence Ball, who had rare experience while working for the Grenfeld Medical Mission in Labrador, holding summer school there and doing social work in the fishing settlements. She is a graduate of Wells College, engaged in social work in Cleveland, was professor of economics and sociology in Lake Erie College for three years, was executive secretary of the Consumers' League of Ohio for three years.

Miss Gertrude Battles Lane, the highest salaried newspaper woman in the world, an exceedingly busy woman as editor of a woman's magazine, has undertaken the work of getting publicity for the food-saving campaign thru women's publications.

Previous to her coming and the arrival of others in the publicity department, Miss Sarah Field Splint volunteered to help get the publicity bureau under way. After Miss Splint graduated from Hunter College she taught school for five years, and then she began writing for magazines.

She believes that 80 per cent of the success of the war rests directly upon the women of America, and she purposes to help see thru the kitchen economy efforts.

MOTHER TO MOTHER.

Today I saw your son march on his way
to France.
I thought of you and waved him a farewell.
Perhaps in some far city you may do the
same for me.
I stood upon the curb and smiled and
cried, "Good-by!"
Sternly denying tears that crowded hotly to my eyes.
He was so good to look upon, that boy
of yours—
So straight and lithe he kept his place
in line so well—
Stepped to the music of the band with
joy and fervor—
Held his head so proudly, and when I
called "Good-by"
Gave me a salute, half gay, half sad.
He thought of you, I know, and I for
you smiled back.
As all my heart gave him God-speed.
Soldiers in every inch! Yet dear, dear
lads.
Their country's first—then ours'
Mine, too, goes on to France.
—A. V. Martin.

DOERS, NOT TALKERS.

"Some coffee! Beats the kind mother used to make." Thus a soldier boy expressed his appreciation of the first permanent canteen to be opened by New York women since the declaration of war, according to the New York World.

"Take these ladies out of the class that talks about what it is going to do and put them at the head of the class that does do," suggested one of the members of the 8th Coast Defense at the 8th Regiment armory, Kingsbridge road and Jerome avenue, in the Bronx.

Here the members of the Canteen Committee of the National League for Woman's Service, at the request of Col. Elmore Austin, the commanding officer, feed 500 khaki-clad boys a day.

The boys have a food allowance of 75 cents a day, and if it were not for the canteen they would have to buy all their meals at small neighboring lunch counters.

Mrs. Donn Barber is chairman of the Canteen Division, Mrs. Nelson Henry is captain and Mrs. Oliver Bridgeman is adjutant. Under Captain Henry there are four lieutenants, each with a squad of sixteen volunteer workers. Each morning the four lieutenants call up half of their respective staffs—eight members—and order them to report for duty at the regiment at 9 o'clock. From that hour until noon the women are busy making sandwiches. They have a regulad sandwich cutting machine, and have been turning out 1,000 a day. Sixty gallons of coffee are made each day and at least 1,000 crullers are bought.

For 15 cents a soldier may get a sandwich, a cruller and a cup of coffee or a glass of ginger ale. The canteen continues open to them from noon until 2 p. m.

"Eats" are served in the regimental mess hall, and the women, many of them well known socially, who have been cooks all morning, don their canteen uniforms of white and act as waitresses at the long cloth-covered tables.

5 MONTHS TO PAY 5

Save $15.00 to $25.00

Tailor-Made-to-Order

Have your clothes made to order from finest, stylish fabrics, by our expert tailors and take 5 months to pay. Every garment guaranteed a perfect fit and best workmanship—actually made to order from your measurements. Your choice of handsome fabrics—in plain colors, checks, stripes, plaids—all weaves. Look into this offer—get the facts (all explained in our Style Book). See if this is not the fairest, most liberal proposition you have ever had on tailor-made-to-order clothes. If you order and the suit is not satisfactory in every way return it at our expense. Otherwise pay on our easy terms.

As Little As $1.00 Down

You can order now by sending as little as a dollar down. Send for our big Style Book showing the latest, snappiest, fashions—also samples of our fabrics. Learn how we tailor our garments to suit your figure and personality—how we interline and hand sew and give you garments that keep their shape. The Style Book tells all about this—also gives full directions for self measurement. Sent free.

Send For FREE Book

$1,000 Reward

This given in gold to anyone who can prove that we do not actually make to order every garment from the customer's measure.

Free Style Book

We will send you the big Style Book with pictures in actual colors of garments made by us. Choose direct from our big selection of 70 cloth samples of best fabrics. Prices and terms too. Send the coupon, and get this Style Book and Samples.

Stanley-Rogers Co.
Dept. 965
1015 Jackson Blvd.
Chicago

SEND THIS COUPON Now

Stanley-Rogers Company,
1015 Jackson Blvd., Dept. 965, Chicago
Please send me FREE your new Fall Style Book showing latest Metropolitan Styles, also 70 Cloth Samples and full particulars of your $1.00 down with 5-Months-to-Pay-Offer.

Name.....
Address.....
Town..... State.....

Motion Picture Boys

Or, On a Camera Hunt

By Anthony J. Wayne

[Copyright 1917 by W. D. Boyce Co.]

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CHAPTER VII.

LENDING A HELPING HAND.

"IT SOUNDED like some one calling!" exclaimed Wally.

"And seemed to come from above us, in the bargain," added Tom, commencing to crane his neck in an effort to look upward.

Then something waving caught Wally's eye, and he cried out excitedly:

"Look up yonder halfway to the top of that rocky cliff! Why, there's some one up there, on a little shelf of rock, and it's a boy about our own age, at that! I wonder how he ever got there."

"But the flood didn't reach as high as that, you can see by the marks on the rocky wall," expostulated Tom.

"Then he must have climbed up so as to escape being carried away," Wally went on to say decidedly; "and now he can't get down again. I've known the same thing to happen to myself; because it's a whole lot easier climbing up than coming down."

"But however can we help him, Wally? If either of us starts in to climb up, why, it'd only be making matters worse, because we'd be in the same trouble that he is facing."

"I've got the rope I thought best to fetch from the wagon," Wally continued, as the one of his usual bright thoughts had struck him. "You see, I wrapped it around my body, thinking we'd find some good use for the same, sooner or later."

"But to use a rope we must get to the top of that cliff, of course," suggested Tom. "That means we ought to leave the camera down here meantime."

"There's no other way that I can figure it out," Wally told him; "and besides, saving a human life ought to go ahead of anything else."

"There's no other way I can figure it out," Wally told him; "and besides, saving a human life ought to go ahead of anything else."

"Oh! I'm not saying a single word against it!" Tom hastened to declare. "Whatever you say goes, remember."

With that he placed the precious camera against a rock, choosing a clean spot in which to deposit his beloved machine. Meanwhile Wally looked around. His main idea was to discover the easiest way in which they could mount to the top of the cliff, so as to get above the imperiled youth, who was clinging to the face of the sheer rock, many feet above the ground, and in constant danger of falling, which would doubtless mean that he would be killed, for there were ugly rocks lying at the base of the height.

"I think I can see a sort of path up there," he now observed. "It's been washed out of sight down here, but this line must mark where it used to lie. Come on, Tom, and we'll have a try."

They were both agile lads and used to considerable hard work along the line of outdoor sports. Hill climbing had always been one of their pet pleasures, so they managed to mount higher and higher.

The boy knew they were about to attempt his rescue, and he encouraged them occasionally with shouts. Perhaps at the same time he was trying to keep up his own courage by making a noise, on the same principle that a country boy whistles as loud as he can when forced to walk past a graveyard after dark.

There were several rather difficult places that confronted them, but presently both lads had arrived at the summit of the cliff, which from their new position must assume the aspect of a precipice to them.

Wally unwound the thin but strong rope which he had so fortunately thought fit to fetch along with him, under the belief that they might find it useful. Then he got down on his hands and knees, and crawling carefully out toward the edge looked over. Tom meanwhile kept close behind him.

"What luck, Wally?" he asked anxiously.

"I couldn't see him that shot," came the reply, as Wally backed again. "He must be further along. I'll move on about twenty feet or so, and try again."

Even the second attempt met with failure. Tom looked alarmed.

"You don't think he could have fallen, do you, Wally?" he demanded, with a vein of horror in his voice.

For answer Wally lifted his voice and shouted:

"Hello there!"

To their satisfaction an answering hail came, and it seemed to spring from a spot just a little farther on.

"It's all right!" called Wally, cheerfully. "We're going to get you up out of there. We have a rope along with us, you see. So keep hanging on a bit longer, and everything will be all right."

"Oh, hurry, please! I'm getting terribly dizzy, and came near going over more than once. I'm sore all over, and so tired!"

"Courage, old chap!" Wally called, as he once more started to advance toward the edge.

Tom kept close to him. When the boy with the rope looked over he evidently saw something that pleased him. Then he twisted his head around so he could speak with his comrade.

"He's here not more than fifteen feet below me, and hanging to a narrow ledge," he told Tom. "The rope will easily reach him. I'll made a slip-noose at the end, and he can pass it under his arms. Then we've got to do some pretty tall pulling between us, remember. Here's a rise in the rock that will be a good thing to set our feet against, so as to get a full swing."

Leaning over he commenced to lower the end of the rope, consisting of the noose he had cleverly fashioned. When it dangled above the head of the boy clinging to the ledge, Wally called out again to him.

"Take hold of the rope, please, and manage to get the noose up under your arms. Don't give any sort of jump if you can avoid it. We'll start to pulling you up by degrees. When you reach the top, do your best to climb over. There, now you have the rope all right. Fix it properly and leave the rest to us."

Tom had hold of the rope. With both feet braced firmly against the uneven place in the rock, he steadied himself to withstand any sort of sudden shock. He did not know but that the strange boy might topple off the ledge about the time he managed to get the noose under his arms; and if everything depended on Wally he might be dragged over the edge.

However, nothing of the kind came to pass, and presently both of them were commencing to haul in the rope, foot by foot. In due time the head of the boy appeared in view. Then he managed to get his fingers fastened to some rough place in the rock plateau so that he could help himself, even as Wally had suggested.

Once he dragged himself up so that he could raise a knee over the edge and the battle was as good as won. A minute later, and the panting boy sat beside his two young rescuers, and with tears in his eyes tried to thank them.

"Please drop that," said Wally, shortly. "We don't feel that we've done anything worth mentioning. Tell us your name. Mine is Wally Beck, and this is Tom Canfield. We belong in the town of Greenville, and chanced to be up here taking motion pictures when the dam broke. And we've secured some wonderful views, too."

"My name is Alec Saunders," the boy told them. "I lived down there," and he shuddered as he pointed to the devastated valley. "And, oh, I'm so afraid my father and little sister have been drowned in that terrible flood!"

"But tell us however you managed to get on that ledge?" asked Wally, unable to conceal the natural curiosity that consumed him.

"It was this way," Alec commenced to explain. "I was away from home at the time, for father had sent me on an important errand to a neighbor who lived a quarter of a mile away from our house. I was on my way back when I first heard the roaring sound. Of course, I knew that the dam had broken, because we'd been warned to get out of the valley. Father meant to abandon the house long before night came; but he and sister were still there when I left. I'm afraid there wasn't one chance in a thousand that they saved themselves. You see, it came on so sudden and so fast."

"What did you do at first?" continued Wally, bent on learning everything.

"I started to run as hard as I could—of course, away from the awful sound," the boy told him, shivering again. "But it happened that I lost my head, and couldn't keep to any path. So all at once I found myself at the foot of that cliff, with the flood sweeping down on me. I guess I must have climbed like mad, for I was nearly crazy with fear. Fact is, I can't remember just how I did manage to get up to where you saw me. Sometimes I almost think I must have had wings and flown there."

"So you did, Alec, wings of fear," asserted Wally. "It's astonishing what a fellow can do when he's badly frightened. I've been thru the mill myself, and know all about it. But go on, please, and tell us the rest of your exciting story."

The boy drew a long breath.

"Oh! I just kept on hanging there, that's all," he explained. "The water didn't reach up to where I was, but it made me sick to watch it sweeping past. I never saw such a terrible thing in all my life. The rocks seemed to tremble and quiver, so I was afraid they'd fall with me into the flood. I don't know how long I've been hanging there, but it seemed ages and ages to me. Has my hair turned white, please tell me?"

Wally hastened to reassure him on that point. The boy really had a splendid crop of black hair, and doubtless was more or less proud of it, which would account in a measure for his anxiety.

"Of course it seemed a long time to you," Wally went on to say, "because you were in deadly danger; but really, it hasn't been much more than an hour and a half since the dam broke. You can see the sun is still high in the heavens."

"I don't understand it at all," Alec told them, plaintively, "but I've lived years since I heard that dreadful roaring sound, and remembered that daddy and little Margie were still in the valley house. Oh, I'm all broken up over it! Perhaps it would have been better for me if I hadn't run as I did."

"I wouldn't say that, if I were you, Alec," Wally told him, shocked to see how hard the poor chap took his bereavement. "Perhaps, after all, your folks may have decided to leave the house and escape, after you left on your errand. Messengers were sent down the valley to get all the people out in time. Anyhow, you must hope for the best, and you have a lot to be thankful for, remember."

"Yes, and I'll never forget both of you, that's right!" cried Alec, seizing a hand of each and squeezing their fingers convulsively.

"Oh, I only meant that it was fortunate for you we happened along," Wally hastened to say. "What we have done isn't much. What will you do now, Alec?"

"I hardly know," the boy who had been rescued replied sadly. "I ought to start in to try and learn if my folks were saved, or not; but there's no one in the valley to tell me."

"Then your only chance to pick up any information is to climb to the upper road," Tom was saying. "Those who left the lowlands will be found scattered along the ridge. Perhaps they might have gone the other way. Don't get discouraged too easily, and keep hoping to the very last."

"Thank you ever so much for your kindness, and your advice!" cried the boy, who, they could see, was struggling bravely to keep from crying, as he faced the bitter calamity that seemed to have overtaken him—home and family gone, no wonder he looked gaunt and sick; Wally felt that he would hardly be able to restrain his surcharged feelings did he happen to be in the same position as Alec Saunders.

Tom impulsively thrust a portion of his supper into the other's hand.

"You haven't had a bite to eat this noon," he hastened to say, "and must be half starved. Munch on that while you're on your way. And both of us hope ever so much you'll find your folks safe and sound. But we must be going down again. You see, we left our camera there, and mean to follow the valley along, to get some of the wonderful scenes that mark the passage of the terrible flood."

So they parted with Alec, hardly thinking they would be apt to run across him again. The descent was so slippery that Wally insisted on using the rope to fasten the two of them together, about ten feet apart.

"That's an old trick with the Swiss Alpine guides when they're crossing some icy glacier," he told Tom, for Wally had been abroad on one occasion. "Then one of the pair always makes it a point to stand firm and hold on to some object while the other fellow is making a difficult passage; afterward the order is reversed, and so both get safely over. We'll try the same sort of tactics going down this steep descent. It pays to believe in 'safety first' every time."

No accident of any consequence befell them while making the passage, tho once Tom did slip, and only for that rope, and the anchorage afforded by his comrade's planted feet, some sort of trouble might have ensued. Tom was glad his chum had conceived such a clever idea, because to have rolled headlong down such a slope might have proved very unpleasant indeed, not to mention the scratches and cuts apt to follow in the train of such an accident.

Both of them were fairly glad when finally they found themselves safely at the bottom of the descent, and none the worse for their recent experience. Some little time had been spent, it was true, but then, considering what valuable aid they had been to one in sore trouble, neither of them felt inclined to complain. What they might be unable to secure that afternoon on account of the gathering of the shadows in the valley could undoubtedly be picked up another day. The effects of that devastating flood would remain for a long time to come; what had taken only a few minutes to effect could not be put by again in its former finished state for years.

The camera was found where they had left it. For once no prowling animal or roving tramp could have been found in all the length and breadth of that forlorn valley; it had been swept as "clean as a whistle," as Wally put it.

Once more then did the two camera lads start down the path of the flood, their eyes constantly on the alert for strange sights. Hardly a minute passed that they did not discover something that appealed to them. Tom had to curb his eagerness to use his camera. If he attempted to secure everything that seemed worth while, the chances were that his supply of films would never begin to hold out. So he began to pass by many things that were in themselves picturesque, and devoted his whole attention to such pictures as were intimately connected with the fury and vagaries of the flood.

More and more were they being impressed with the mighty force with which the exultant waters had swept everything before them, once released from their confinement back of that riven wall of concrete and rock. A human being would have been like a chip on the wide ocean, once that towering wall of water struck him.

CHAPTER VIII.

STRANGE FRUIT A TREE BORE.

THERE were times when the two boys found it almost impossible to proceed, such were the obstacles confronting them. Only by the exercise of considerable judgment were they able to make progress; and often they had to go around impassable spots where logs and all sorts of refuse had been piled up much higher than their heads.

"Here's where the value of the celebrated flank movement comes in," laughed Wally, after they had been

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forced to make use of this device again. "You remember how Grant just started in and flanked Lee until he caused the Confederate General to fall back on Richmond and Petersburg for that last winter of the Civil War? Well, when you can't go ahead there's only one thing left to you, which we're now trying out with success."

"Hold on, Wally, I must get that fearful heap of stuff that's been thrown up where that knot of big trees stood out against all the force of the flood. It'll make a jim-dandy picture. You stalk up and down in front of the same. I want you to serve as a measuring rod, so people can understand just how high the pile is."

"Oh! I'm always willing to try anything once," asserted that good-natured Wally, as he commenced to get in position, while Tom slung his camera around and adjusted the tripod to suit the occasion.

Then the merry clatter of the crank could be heard. It sounded almost ghostly amidst such silent surroundings, for the once populated valley was now as deserted as tho a plague had swept down upon it; every blade of green grass torn out by the roots or hidden under layers of mud; many of the smaller trees broken off short; and the entire scene one of such utter desolation as to make the heart sick while contemplating it.

"I'm glad to see that the light still holds good," Tom was saying, as he worked the handle industriously, "and unless I'm greatly mistaken these pictures are going to be the cream of their kind. If this is the kind of luck that's coming to me, I needn't ever fear of being left at the post, and all that sort of thing."

Wally was delighted to know that his particular chum seemed so well pleased.

"How about that row of bending trees over there, Tom?" he asked. "They look queer enough, for a fact, all knocked out of the perpendicular; and the stuff that's hanging from their limbs makes me think of an Irish wash day. Can you use them?"

"I think I'd better let them get past," the photographer went on to say, having completed his work in the other quarter. "They're odd enough, to be sure; but then somehow, I've a hunch that we'll run across lots of things later on that may go far ahead of them."

"Just as you say, Tom; you're the boss in that line. So let's be moving, if you're thru here, and we can make a detour around that pile of rubbish."

So working their way along, the boys managed to cover considerable ground. Still not a sound could be heard, save that suggestive rush of the water in the lower reaches of the valley. It was most grewsome, such absolute solitude. Yet they had seen a number of places where once happy homes had stood, for the battered foundations of the houses remained, where the mud had not wholly hidden them; and there were also other signs to indicate that gardens and outbuildings had once been a part of the landscape, tho it was hard to believe this.

"One thing I hope, Tom," said Wally, at length, after they had been surveying all this scene of desolation for quite a while, "and it's that we never again have the fortune to be taking pictures of such an awful happening as this. Why, it's like prowling around in a big graveyard. How do we know but what this place is that very thing, right now? Some of those unhappy people may have been caught by the flood, being as reckless and foolhardy as Alec's folks were. Why, there may be bodies lying under these masses of earth and stones all around us. The truth will not be known for several moons, I imagine."

"Please don't talk in that way, Wally," urged Tom; "you give me the cold shivers. Of course, I hope just as you do, and that our next assignment may take in a circus, or something as lively. And one of these fine days, Wally, perhaps it may be our good fortune, yours and mine, to be away out in the heart of Africa, or down along the mighty Amazon, taking motion pictures of wild animals in their native haunts. I've always had a hankering in that direction, you may remember. If we get enough money out of this venture, who knows what big notion will seize upon us? Mighty oaks from little acorns grow, and many a vast undertaking had a smaller beginning than this start of ours."

"Oh, there's a poor horse wedged in between those three trees!" exclaimed Wally, suddenly. "Of course, he's as dead as Julius Caesar, or a doornail; but I wonder whether he was cast there by the current, or did he get stuck while trying to escape from the flood, and meet his fate in that way?"

"I'm tempted to take a shot at him, anyhow," observed Tom. "It's a queer situation, and worth while using a few yards of film on as a sample of what may have happened to many other beasts unable to escape in time."

So the defunct animal was brought into proper focus and made to serve as a terrible example of the power of the plague that had visited Happy Valley; after which the two boys pursued their way.

It could not be for a great while longer, because, as Tom declared, the light was apt to go back on them shortly; there would be little use trying to work the camera once the sun had sunk so low that the shadows were falling; such pictures are only a source of great disappointment to camera man and audience alike.

"One thing we've got to decide on," remarked Tom, about this time, "which has to do with our sleeping tonight. Of course we'll have to get out of this muddy region down here. I wouldn't think of staying in the midst of these dreadful scenes for anything. It gives me the creeps just to look around and see such desolation."

"I'm with you there," Wally quickly added. "Besides, we couldn't find any dry place to make a fire in. But by climbing part way up the side of the rise, we'll soon get above the watermark, and things will look different."

"Now, what on earth do you call that bulky object up yonder in that tree, Wally?" When the other had taken a look he burst out with a bubbling cry.

"If that doesn't beat the band!" he exclaimed, as tho fairly staggered by his discovery. "Why, as sure as you live, Tom, it's a house!"

"What, a house nestling among the branches of a giant tree?" ejaculated the boy who carried the camera.

"Just what it is, and no mistake," Wally went on to say positively.

"But this isn't the country where people live in the treetops," objected the other, incredulously. "I've read about such things, but for the most part they were only shelters built on platforms, about what some kinds of big monkeys would construct, whereas, that seems to be a regular house."

"But only a small frame one after all, Tom. I guess it must have been picked up by the flood, and tossed where we see it now. We're run across some mighty queer freaks so far, but, honest to goodness, this beats everything!"

"It certainly does," admitted Tom. "Let's make our way closer to it."

"Of course you'll have to get a picture of such a curiosity?" Wally continued.

"I'll be disappointed if I can't manage to do that same thing," the camera boy flung back over his shoulder, for he was already hurrying ahead, bent upon reaching a spot where a better and less obstructed view might be had of the strange object beyond.

"The light bids fair to hold on for some little time yet, I imagine," Wally was saying, as he stumbled along, for the path was anything but clear, and it necessitated continual care to avoid being thrown down.

"That's right," Tom agreed, and then stopped to take a comprehensive view, so that he could come upon the spot with the sun shining from the proper quarter.

There could be no doubt with regard to the character of the bulky object lodged amidst the limbs of the big tree; it was a badly battered dwelling, a small cottage which had been carried off its foundations, borne along on the flood, and by some strange freak of fate tossed in its present elevated position, the

(Continued on Page 19.)

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THE FAIRY CORNER

MARKET DAY.

Please, sir, I wish a spool of beans
And seven pints of silk;
Then wrap me up a bag of pins,
And half a square of milk.

I'll take an ell of sausages,
And thirteen gross of cream,
A can of freshly laundered eggs;
Of doughnuts just a ream.

I want a dozen honey, ripe,
And half a foot of cheese,
Then give me, sir, a yard of oil
Wrapped up in paper, please.

A bag of sugar vinegar,
A dram of lettuce, too.
And with a cask of butter-scotch
I think that this will do.

Please send my purchase quickly, sir—
I live upon the Hill,
An acre and a ton away—
And charge it in the bill.

—Abbie Farwell Brown.

WINKUM BINKS' DREAM.

Little Winkum Binks threw himself down in the tall grass, wishing hard that he had a playmate. He was just a sturdy, blue-eyed small boy who had been busy all the morning, loading his cart with stones and gravel to fill up a hole down at the far end of the yard, so that he and his mother might have a beautiful garden of pinks and daffy-down-dillies later in the year.

It was just as the last load was on that one of the wheels came off; he had worked patiently at it, trying to put it back, but it wouldn't stay. The pin was lost and he couldn't make another, for he hadn't any tools—not even a jackknife in his pocket; so he just stretched out under the trees, with the sunlight and the shadows dancing up and down his limbs and jumping sometimes into his eyes, so that he had to shut them close.

There he lay for a long time, seeing pretty pictures in the soft clouds above. Soon he seemed to feel a tug at his arms and, looking down, he saw there was a big beetle, inviting him to a feast and merrymaking of all the beetles. He thanked him quite politely, and at once got up to follow, having to take small steps and to go very slowly, so as not to step on his tiny host. The grass and hillocks were rough for Mr. Beetle, and often he would catch his legs in the little earth twigs and go tumbling over on his back, and it would be a few seconds before he could turn himself over again. Binks wanted to help him but he did not know how, and besides, he thought it would be more polite not to seem to notice his clumsiness.

After a while they arrived at Mr. Beetle's home, down at the foot of an old stump. The host pulled away a wisp of grass and motioned Binks to enter, but the latter shook his head and thought it would be better for him to stay outside where there was more air and space.

A big yellow-bellied spider had spun a web across the little twigs and rootlets, making a nice roof, and under this Mr. and Mrs. Beetle and all the little beetles lived. The room had been swept clean, little green branches filled the corners, while the long table was set and decorated with star blossoms. And soon the guests began to arrive.

There were all kinds and sizes of butterflies who poised themselves on the twigs and branches, showing their beautiful wings, touched with all the colors of the rainbow, in order to add to the decoration of the room. The grasshoppers came, also, dressed in gay coats of green and making a courtly bow to their partners, sometimes getting their long legs caught in the train of the butterflies. A pair of humming birds came in their gauzy attire flitting around and adding to the harmony with their drowsy song. Under a huge green leaf sat a big black spotted toad, with two little tiny toads twinkling their bright eyes at all the merrymaking and wishing for a place among them; but they were not invited, so they could only sit and run out their wee red tongues, hoping to catch a taste of the windblown aroma of good things.

Binks did want to go over and pick up the little toads, for he liked the feeling of the soft, spotted bodies in his warm hands, but he was afraid of disturbing Mr. Beetle and his guests; besides, he felt that he should be very good and polite to be entertained by such wonderful company, so he sat quite still with a warm feeling of content.

While the feast was going on a swift-winged messenger came sailing in—a huge bluebottle fly who brought a message and an invitation from Mr. Titmouse, who lived far up in the wood, to come that evening to a dance. Mr. Beetle accepted with alacrity, sending back profuse thanks and saying that he would bring all his company and also his most honored guest, Winkum Binks.

In the darkness they made their way up the grassy hill, the hoppers going with a hop, skip and jump, while the butterflies sailed along like so many little airships, and the slow-moving beetles traveled as fast as their legs would permit. Mr. Titmouse had sent down an army of fireflies to light the way and great, soft, white moths stood in the shadowy places to mark the road.

Mr. Titmouse had invited a gay company of little animals, there was music, and every one danced. One little mole came up to Binks and asked him to be his partner; but Binks, thinking sorrowfully of his size, refused, for he knew that if his feet wandered in among this little company he could not avoid stepping on a dozen or more. So he was content with looking on, while the soft music played and the wee animals whirled about faster and yet faster.

Then all of a sudden came a crashing noise, which made Binks open his eyes to find Daddy just slamming the gate behind him, and the soft grass tickling his nose and eyes.

"Why, 'Winkie,' what's the matter? Been asleep?"

"No, Dad, I've been watching all the little earth people holding a carnival, and oh, I've had such a good time!"

IN CLOVER.

There was once a little seed clover field. It shone blue-green and red in the warm sun, so still and quiet, that no one would have guessed how anxious it was about the future. And there was a queen bumble bee hidden away on the top of her cells full of eggs, way out in a nest chamber at the end of a field tunnel. And she was quiet and anxious, too.

Last year there had been a disease among the bumble bees that had killed so many that the clover blossoms weren't very well unlocked, and it was up to this mother bee to raise a whole nest full of bumbles in order to save the clover field. There was no other way, and that is the reason there was so much anxiety about the future.

So Mother Bumble had been sitting for hours on the top of her brood cells, where her eggs were lying on top of some honey and pollen that was fixed so that the young bee-grubs might find something to eat as soon as they hatched out. She was keeping them warm, just as hens keep their eggs warm till the chicks are hatched, and in order that she needn't move, she had made a little separate cell and filled it with honey within reach of her long trunk and so she could feed without stirring from the place.

But she had laid some more eggs and she must go and get some more honey and pollen, so she started out to unlock some more clover flowers. But what if anything happened to her nest while she was away? It was safe enough when she was at home, with her sting all ready to fight with, but now she must go, and she was anxious.

The field mouse was out hunting in the clover. She had a nestful of young ones to nurse, and it made her very hungry. She nosed here, she nosed there for her dinner, but suddenly she stopped. She had come to the hole that led to the bumble bee's nest, and as she sniffed she smelt honey. She knew Mother Bumble was away, for she had heard her buzzing as she flew, so the field mouse started down the tunnel.

The cat was prowling out in the hot sun in the clover field. She, too, had some young kittens to nurse, and it made her very hungry. She was in some danger from dogs and boys, and she hadn't had much luck. Mother Bumble buzzed out of a clover blossom, but she took no notice of her, for she had smelt something—a field mouse! Inch by inch, softly, she crept forward. Her eyes narrowed till they were just slits between the lids, as she saw the tail of the field mouse just outside the bumble bees' nest.

Then she sprang!

There was a squeal, and then silence, as the cat ran for the fence with the field mouse in her claws. And I don't suppose the bumble bee ever knew what had happened, but if the field mouse had destroyed the eggs as she ate the honey there wouldn't have been any young bumbles to unlock the clover blossoms and scatter the pollen about. You see it was the cat that saved the clover field.

A LITTLE FIREMAN.

"There isn't much use in my having this fireman's suit; I shall never be able to go to a fire," Gregory said, when he found the long rubber coat and the red helmet with his other birthday gifts.

"Oh, I wouldn't mind that," his father said. "A fireman has a good deal to do besides just going to fires. He has to keep the engine-house in perfect order, and the engine shining and in repair. There are the horses to be cared for too. All the time the fireman is ready to go, but he keeps busy in the meantime."

"I never thought about that," Gregory said. "I'll see if I can't find something to do too."

So he put on his waterproof coat and his red helmet and went out to the stable, playing that was the engine-house.

Jim, the stable boy, was mending harness, so Gregory took one of his soft cloths and polished the metal parts until they shone like gold. Then he put fresh hay in the boxes in the stalls and dusted the carriages. After that Jim thought he might turn the water in the hose and wash the stable windows.

"I could water the lawn, too, couldn't I, Jim?" Gregory asked.

"Why, yes, I'd like to have you do that," Jim said. "It will help me."

So Gregory watered the lawn and the flower-beds, holding the hose high up in the air, just as if he were a real fireman. The grass and the flowers needed the wetting. There had been no rain for two weeks, and everything was very brown and dry.

As Gregory worked he thought how fine it must be to go to a fire. He could hear the bell and the rattle of the hook and ladder and the tramp of the horses' feet. He thought too, tho, about what his father had said to him: "All the time the fireman is ready, but he keeps busy in the meantime."

"I'll just keep busy," Gregory said to himself.

What was that? Gregory heard a frightened cry, and he saw a little puff of smoke on the other side of the fence. The grocer's boy had a box packed with straw in his arms and a box of matches had set the straw on fire. He was a little boy, not much larger than Gregory, and he was very much frightened.

"Don't be afraid, I'll put it out. Drop it on the sidewalk!" Gregory shouted, running over the lawn with his hose.

He turned the hose on the straw and the smoke was gone in a minute.

The grocer's boy looked in wonder at Gregory, at his helmet, and his coat.

"Are you a fireman?" he asked.

"Yes!" Gregory said, for he knew he had been ready.

TWO MAXIMS.

No. 1—Good examples are catching.

No. 2—A thing doesn't need to be ugly to be useful.

Edward Bok, the editor of the Ladies' Home Journal, has proved both these ideas. He lives at Merion, just out of Philadelphia, and he planted thousands of plants along the roads at that suburb, trusting the public to play fair and enjoy the flowers without picking them. And it did.

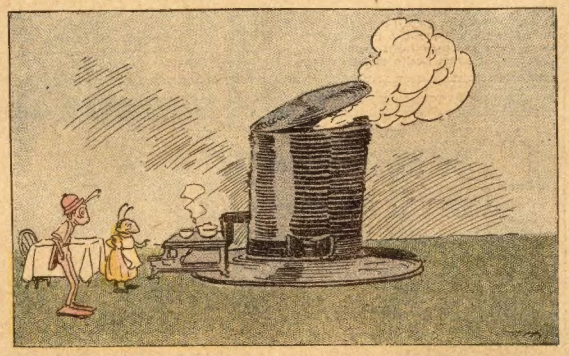
Then he planted a lot of roses along the railroad track near his home and when they blossom they cover the bare rocks and earth with a cloak of pink and green. But they do more than that; the roots of those roses do for the railroad what it used to take the labor of men to do. They hold the earth from sliding down the track when big trains or the spring thaw comes.

DISTANT FRIENDS.

A person well skilled in geography asked a loan of money of a friend, and urged his suit by stating that he had been in all quarters of the globe and had friends in each. He was asked their names and dealings.

"Oh," said he, "I have often dealings with Tim Bucto, in Africa for ivory; with my old friend Ben Gal, for rice; Bil Boa sends me fruit from Spain, and there is Pat Agonia and Sam O'Thracia and Frank Onio, and——"

"Hold," replied the other; "you can't be on good terms with friends who keep themselves at such a very great distance."



Mrs.-Bug—"John, I would certainly like to know what kind hearted person left us such a nice piece of stovepipe."

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No. 5071, Child's Dress.

Motion Picture Boys

(Continued From Page 17.)

queerest fruit any tree could have borne.

Tom quickly figured on his location, and proceeded to adjust the legs of his stout tripod, so that he could secure the proper elevation. When he had that arranged to his fancy, he would be ready to commence turning the crank, and taking his remarkable picture.

Meanwhile Wally, lost in astonishment, was making a complete circuit around the tree, so as to observe the castaway cottage from every conceivable angle. He several times stopped to gaze, and on such occasions might have been noticed to rub his eyes furiously, and then look again. Evidently Wally found it difficult to believe he was not dreaming, nor could he be blamed for such a fancy.

Having finally succeeded in arranging his camera to suit him, Tom prepared to begin operations. As it was a still picture, he did not mean to give it much time, for it would be a waste of precious film. Only the moving branches of the tree afforded a sign of life and action; but the main thing was to secure a striking and faithful photograph of this freak of the flood.

"Think you've got it from the best angle, do you, Tom?" Wally asked, and as he was some twenty feet or so distant, he naturally raised his voice more or less—the noise of the passing water made this necessary, too, for in meeting obstructions in the shape of outcropping rocks, and logs that were lodged against standing trees, it swirled and gurgled, and even roared sullenly.

"I mean to try from several points," the photographer replied, "because I wouldn't want to make a foozle of this picture for anything. If we keep on finding such freaks as we go on down the valley tomorrow, I'll have the greatest collection of curious sights that was ever flashed on a screen. They'll think it a bit of Africa, where the natives live in the trees."

Then he started turning his crank industriously for a brief space of time, and the sound that followed was not unlike the hum of a swarm of bees about to start for the woods.

Wally continued to feast his eyes on the wonderful sight. He wanted to impress it so vividly upon his mind that he would be able to recall its amazing features at will in the future.

All at once he started violently. There was a reason for his agitation, for surely he had suddenly detected a movement of some kind up there in connection with the damaged cottage lodged in the tree. Still wondering whether his eyes might not have deceived him, he craned his neck and looked again.

"Tom, oh, Tom!" he cried, starting recklessly toward his comrade, who had just stopped work as the satisfied with what had been accomplished, and, hearing the voice of the other raised in such evident alarm, half fancied that possibly a second edition of the flood might be bearing down upon them.

"What is it?" Tom called out, making as if to seize his camera, so as to be in a condition for speedy flight if the occasion warranted such a course of procedure.

"Look up and see!" cried Wally, still more excitedly. "There's some one in the tree house, sure there is, Tom! I heard what sounded like the word 'help,' and if you watch sharp, you'll see a rag waving from that window at the end!"

Further chapters of this interesting story will be found in next week's Ledger. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly urged to send in your subscription at once. It costs you only $1.00. Be wise and attend to this today.

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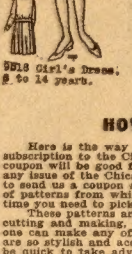

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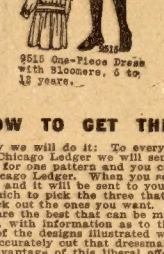

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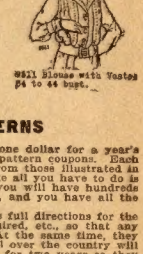

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